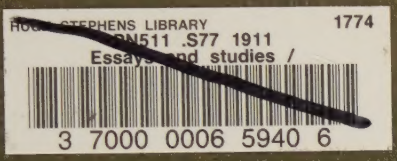
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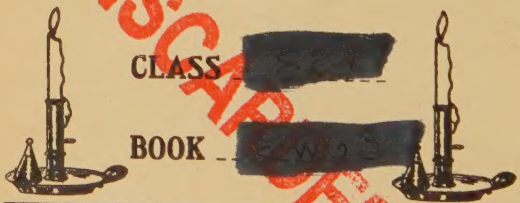

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ESSAYS AND STUDIES

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

SIXTH IMPRESSION

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TO MY FATHER

PREFACE.

These Essays, written at intervals during a space of seven years, are now reissued with no change beyond the correction of an occasional error, the addition of an occasional note, and the excision or modification of an occasional phrase or passage. To omit or to rewrite any part would be to forfeit the one claim which I should care to put up on their behalf; that they give frank and full expression to what were, at the time of writing, my sincere and deliberate opinions. Only where I have detected a positive error or suspected a possible injustice have I changed or cancelled a syllable. As I see no reason to suppress what I have no desire to recant, I have not allowed myself to strike out the rare allusions, which might otherwise have been erased, to such obscure and ephemeral names or matters as may be thought unworthy even of so slight a record as the notice here conferred on them. The one object which gives to this book whatever it may have of unity is the study of art in its imaginative aspects. I have desired above all things to avoid narrowness and dogmatism, and to say simply what I think or perceive to be

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the truth on such matters, and on such only, as I can claim at least to have studied with the devotion of years to the utmost of what ability was in me. The convictions expressed are in any case my own, and due to the inspiration of no party, no stranger, and no friend. My judgment has been guided wholly by my sense of the service or the disservice done to art by the works or the opinions on which I have taken occasion to remark. I have spoken but once or twice at the outside either of bad work or bad criticism, of folly or of falsehood, of ineptitude or of malignity; my chief aim, as my chief pleasure, in all such studies as these has been rather to acknowledge and applaud what I found noble and precious than to scrutinize or to stigmatize what I might perceive to be worthless and base. It is not indeed always possible to show cause for our admiration of great men and their great work, and not seem in passing to stigmatize by implication the base work or the baser comments on other men's work of those who hate and covet the greatness which they can neither injure nor attain, the glory which they can neither diminish nor endure; to praise what is good in any kind is to dispraise what is bad, and every honour done to men worthy of honour is an insult to men who are powerless to confer it and hopeless to receive.

To any who may think it presumptuous for a labourer in one field of art to express his opinion on work done in another field, for a student in one line of art to pass sentence on a student or it may be on a master in a different line, I can only say that I see no reason which should

forbid such an one more than another to form or to utter the opinion which men unpractised in any form of art have an undisputed privilege to hold and to express. It is certain that a man's judgment may be shaped and coloured by the lines of his own life and the laws of his own labour; that a poet for example may be as bad a judge of painting as a painter may be of poetry, each man looking vainly in his neighbour's work for the qualities proper to his own; but it does not follow that either must of necessity be fool enough to mispraise or to dispraise a poem or a picture for the presence or the absence of qualities foreign to its aim. I would ask for either artist no more than is conceded as an unquestionable right to critics who are clear from any charge of good or bad work done in any but the critical line of labour: I would submit that there is really no evident or apparent reason why he should be less competent than his fellows to appreciate the merit or demerit of work which lies out of the way of his own ambition or achievement. A lifelong delight in the glories of an art which is not my own, quickened by the intercourse of many years with eminent artists of different and even of opposite schools, may have failed to make me a good critic of their art, but can hardly have left with me less right to judge or less faculty of judging than every writer on the subject is permitted to claim for himself. One thing at least the cultivation of this natural instinct or impulse of enjoyment can hardly have failed to ensure. A student from without who enjoys all forms and phases of an alien art as he respects all forms and

phases of his own will be unlikely to make himself the conscious or unconscious mouthpiece of a single school or a select coterie. So much I think may justly be claimed for this book; that it is not a channel for the transmission of other men's views on art, a conduit for the diffusion of praise or blame derived from foreign sources or discoloured by personal feelings. Twice only have I had occasion to review some part of the work of two eminent poets whose friendship I had enjoyed from my early youth: a fact which in the opinion of certain writers is more than sufficient to disqualify me from passing any sentence on their work that may be worthy of a moment's attention. The accident of personal intimacy, it should seem, deprives you of all right to express admiration of what you might allowably have found admirable in a stranger. I know not whether we are to infer that the one right which remains to a man in this sad case is the right of backbiting and belying; but it is certain that any indiscreet attempt to vindicate his right of praising what he finds to be praiseworthy will at once expose him to the risk of being classed among the members of a shadowy society which meets or does not meet for purposes of reciprocal adulation. In the present instance the fact of reciprocity might at first sight seem somewhat difficult to establish; considering that neither the one nor the other of the poets whom, though my friends, I have allowed myself to admire, and though their fellow-craftsman have permitted myself to praise, has ever published one sentence or one syllable of friendly or of adverse criticism

on any work of mine. How then their opinion of it can be matter of public knowledge, or on what ground the damning charge of "mutual admiration" can be sustained, it passes the modest range of my weak imagination to conceive. Nor can it figure to itself anything more pitiful and despicable than a society of authors, artists, or critics held together by a contract for the exchange of reciprocal flattery, except a society of the same kind whose bond of union should be a compact of detraction, a confederacy of malignities, an alliance for the defamation of men more honoured than its members. On the other hand, it may be reasonably assumed, or at least it may plausibly be alleged, that a writer whose interest or whose admiration is confined to the works of a single school or the effects of a particular style in art can claim no higher place or worthier office than that of herald or interpreter to a special community of workmen. If, however, my critical writing should be found liable to this charge, it will at least be admitted that the circle which confines my interest and limits my admiration is a tolerably wide one. I have not unfrequently found myself accused of lax and undiscriminating indulgence in too catholic and uncritical a taste, too wide and erratic a range of inconsistent sympathies, by men whose ways of work lay so far apart that they seemed to me as unable to estimate each other aright as I to withhold from the work of either the tribute of my thanks. It is impossible, I have been told, that any man of fair culture and intelligence can sincerely and equally admire at the same time the leaders or the followers of such

opposite schools in art or letters. That must in effect be a somewhat elastic definition which should comprise in one term all the subjects of my study or my praise, a somewhat irregular process which should reduce them all to one denomination, a somewhat vague watchword which should marshal them all under one standard. I think upon the whole that having now gathered together these divers waifs of tentative criticism I may leave the babblers and backbiters who prate of "mutual admiration" and the cant of a coterie absorbed in its own self-esteem and fettered by its own passwords, to the ultimate proof or disproof of simple fact and plain evidence. If I am indeed one of those unfortunates who can see nothing good outside their own sect of partisans, it will not be denied that the sect to which I belong must be singularly comprehensive; nor will it be questioned that I am singularly fortunate in the variety and the eminence of my supposed allies. I would not be betrayed into any show of egotism or recrimination; but I thought it best not to let these reprints go forth together for the first time on their own account without a word of remark on their object and their scope. They are here arranged according to scale and subject, with the date appended when necessary; and have now but to show for themselves whether or not they can pretend to any more noticeable or more vital quality than that of sincere desire and studious effort to see the truth and speak it.

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VICTOR HUGO: L'HOMME QUI RIT.

Once only in my life I have seen the likeness of Victor Hugo's genius. Crossing over when a boy from Ostend, I had the fortune to be caught in midchannel by a thunderstorm strong enough to delay the packet some three good hours over the due time. About midnight the thundercloud was right overhead, full of incessant sound and fire, lightening and darkening so rapidly that it seemed to have life, and a delight in its life. At the same hour the sky was clear to the west, and all along the sea-line there sprang and sank as to music a restless dance or chase of summer lightnings across the lower sky: a race and riot of lights, beautiful and rapid as a course of shining Oceanides along the tremulous floor of the sea. Eastward at the same moment the space of clear sky was higher and wider, a splendid semicircle of too intense purity to be called blue; it was of no colour nameable by man; and midway in it between the storm and the sea hung the motionless full moon; Artemis watching with a serene splendour of scorn the

battle of Titans and the revel of nymphs, from her stainless and Olympian summit of divine indifferent light. Underneath and about us the sea was paved with flame; the whole water trembled and hissed with phosphoric fire; even through the wind and thunder I could hear the crackling and sputtering of the water-sparks. In the same heaven and in the same hour there shone at once the three contrasted glories, golden and fiery and white, of moonlight and of the double lightnings, forked and sheet; and under all this miraculous heaven lay a flaming floor of water.

That, in a most close and exact symbol, is the best possible definition I can give of Victor Hugo's genius. And the impression of that hour was upon me the impression of his mind; physical, as it touched the nerves with a more vivid passion of pleasure than music or wine; spiritual, as it exalted the spirit with the senses and above them to the very summit of vision and delight. It is no fantastic similitude, but an accurate likeness of two causes working to the same effect. There is nothing but that delight like the delight given by some of his work. And it is because his recent book has not seldom given it me again, that I have anything here to say of it.

It is a book to be rightly read, not by the lamplight of realism, but by the sunlight of his imagination reflected upon ours. Only so shall we see it as it is, much less understand it. The beauty it has, and the meaning, are ideal; and therefore cannot be impaired by any want of realism. Error and violation of likelihood or fact which would damn a work of Balzac's or of Thackeray's cannot

even lower or lessen the rank and value of a work like this. To put it away because it has not the great and precious qualities of their school, but those of a school quite different, is just as wise as it would be on the other hand to assault the fame of Bacon on the ground that he has not written in the manner of Shakespeare; or Newton's, because he has not written like Milton. This premised, I shall leave the dissection of names and the anatomy of probabilities to the things of chatter and chuckle so well and scientifically defined long since by Mr. Charles Reade as "anonymuncules who go scribbling about;" there is never any lack of them; and it will not greatly hurt the master poet of an age that they should shriek and titter, cackle and hoot inaudibly behind his heel. It is not every demigod who is vulnerable there.

This book has in it, so to say, a certain elemental quality. It is great because it deals greatly with great emotions. It is a play played out not by human characters only; wind and sea, thunder and moonlight, have their parts too to fill. Nor is this all; for it is itself a thing like these things, living as it were an elemental life. It pierces and shakes the very roots of passion. It catches and bends the spirit as Pallas caught Achilles and bent him by the hair. Were it not so, this would be no child of the master's; but so, as always, it is. Here too the birth-mark of the great race is visible.

It is not, whatever it may seem, a novel or a study, historical or social. What touches on life or manners we see to be accidental byplay as soon as we see what the book is indeed; the story of the battle of a human spirit, first with Fate, then with the old three subordinate

enemies: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. And here I will say where the flaw, as I think, lies; for, like other great things, a great book may have a flaw. The Flesh and the Devil, Josiane and Barkilphedro, are perfect; the World is drawn wrong. And the reason is not far to seek. We all brush daily against the Flesh and the Devil, we must all rub shoulders and shake hands with them, and they are always much the same at root, only stronger and weaker with this man than with that; therefore it needs only the hand of a great poet to paint them greatly, after their true and very likeness. But the World is multiform. To paint one aright of its many faces, you must have come close enough on that side to breathe the breath of its mouth and see by the light of its eyes. No accumulation of fact upon fact gleaned and laid up never so carefully will avail you instead. Titian himself cannot paint without colours. Here we have canvass and easel duly made ready, but the colours are not to be had. In other words, here are many curious and accurate details painfully studied and stored up for use, but unhappily it is not seldom for misuse. Here are many social facts rightly retailed and duly laid out side by side, but no likeness of social life. Here are the Mohocks of the day, for example, much as we find them in Swift; here is often visible even a vexatious excess of labour in the research of small things; useless, because the collector of them has never applied his spirit to the spirit of the time in which these small things played in passing their small parts. He cannot, because that time has no attraction for him on any one side to temper the repulsion he feels from another side of it. Pure hate and

scorn of an age or a people destroy the faculty of observation, much more of description, even in the historic mind ; what then will they do in the poetic? Doubtless there has been, as doubtless there is now, much that is hateful and contemptible in social matters, English or other ; much also, as certainly, that is admirable and thankworthy. Doubtless too at one time and another there has been more visible of evil and shameful than of noble and good. But there can never have been a time of unmixed good or evil ; and he only who has felt the pulse of an age can tell us how fast or slow its heart really beat towards evil or towards good. A man who writes of a nation or a time, however bad and base in the main, without any love for it, cannot write of it well. A great English poetess has admirably said that a poet's heart may be large enough to hold two nations.[1] Victor Hugo's, apart from its heroic love of man, a love matchless except by Shelley's, holds two nations especially close, two of the greatest ; it has often been said he is French and Spanish ; that is, he loves France and Spain, the spirit of them attracts his spirit ; but he does not love England. There are great Englishmen whom no man

[1] I know not if it has been remarked how decisive a note of the English spirit there is in Molière, a Frenchman of the French : an English current, as recognisable as indefinable, passing under and through the tide-stream of his genius. There is a more northern flavour mixed into his mind, a more northern tone interfused, than into any other of the great French writers. Rabelais excepted. Villon, for instance, in so many ways so like them both, is nothing if not Parisian. And if I am not wrong no third great Frenchman has ever found such acceptance and sympathy among Englishmen unimbued with the French spirit as Rabelais and Molière. For them instinct breaks down the bar of ignorance.

has praised more nobly than he : but the spirit of historic England has no attraction for his. Hence, far more important than any passing errors of grotesque nomenclature or misplaced detail, the spiritual and ingrained error of the book, seen only from its social or historic side. We catch nowhere for a moment the note of English life in the reign of Anne.[1] Those for whom I write will know, and will see, that I do not write as a special pleader for a country or a class, as one who will see no spot in England or nobility. But indeed it is an abuse of words to say that England is governed or misgoverned by her aristocracy. A republican, studying where to strike, should read better the blazon on his enemy's shield. "England," I have heard it said, "is not 'a despotism tempered by epigrams,' but a plutocracy modified by accidents."

Enough now of the flaws and failures in this work; "enough, with over-measure." We have yet before us the splendour of its depths and heights. Entering the depths first, we come upon the evil spirit of the place. Barkilphedro, who plays here the part of devil, is a bastard begotten by Iago upon his sister, Madame de Merteuil : having something of both, but diminished and degraded ; wanting, for instance, the deep dæmonic calm of their lifelong patience. He has too much inward heat of discontent, too much fever and fire, to

[1] For one instance, if a court lady had indeed insulted Swift, she would certainly have had by way of answer something (in De Quincey's phrase) "too monstrously Swiftian for quotation;" something so monstrous, that the Dean might thenceforth have held the next place to Gwynplaine in her heart.

know their perfect peace of spirit, the equable element of their souls, the quiet of mind in which they live and work out their work at leisure. He does not sin at rest: there is somewhat of fume and fret in his wickedness. Theirs is the peace of the devil, which passeth all understanding. He, though like them sinning for sin's sake and hating for the love of hatred, has yet a too distinct and positive quality of definable evil. He is actually ungrateful, envious, false. Of them we cannot say that they are thus or thus; in them there is a purity and simplicity of sin, which has no sensible components; which cannot be resolved by analysis into this evil quality and that. Barkilphedro, as his maker says with profound humour, "has his faults." We fear that a sufficient bribe might even tempt him into virtue for a moment, seduce him to soil by a passing slip the virginity of vice. Nevertheless, as the evil spirit of envy rather than the devil absolute, he is a strong spirit and worth study. The few chapters, full of fiery eloquence and a passion bitter as blood, in which his evil soul is stripped and submitted to vivisection, contain, if read aright, the best commentary ever written on Iago. We see now at last, what no scholiast on Shakespeare could show us, how the seed may be sown and watered which in season shall bring forth so black a blossom, a poison so acrid and so sure.

In this poem as in the old pictures we see the serpent writhing, not fangless, under the foot of an angel, and in act to bruise as of old the heel that bruises his head. Only this time it is hardly an angel of light. Unconscious of her office as another St. Michael, the Angel of the Flesh treads under the unconquerable Devil.

Seen but once in full, the naked glory of the Titaness irradiates all one side of the poem with excess and superflux of splendour.

Among the fields and gardens, the mountain heights and hollows, of Victor Hugo's vast poetic kingdom, there are strange superb inmates, bird and beast of various fur and feather; but as yet there was nothing like this. Balzac, working with other means, might have given us by dint of anxious anatomy some picture of the virgin harlot. A marvellous study we should have had, one to burn into the brain and brand the memory for ever; but rather a thing to admire than desire. The magnetism of beauty, the effluence of attraction, he would not have given us. But now we have her from the hands of a poet as well as student, new-blown and actual as a gathered flower, in warm bloom of blood and breath, clothed with live colour, fair with significant flesh, passionately palpable. This we see first and feel, and after this the spirit. It is a strange beast that hides in this den of roses. Such have been however, and must be. "We are all a little mad, beginning with Venus." Her maker's definition is complete: "a possible Astarte latent in an actual Diana." She is not merely spotless in body; she is perverse, not unclean; there is nothing of foulness in the mystic rage of her desire. She is indeed "stainless and shameless;" to be unclean is common, and her "divine depravity" will touch nothing common or unclean. She has seven devils in her, and upon her not a fleck of filth. She has no more in common with the lewd low hirelings of the baser school of realism than a creature of the brothel and the street has in

common with the Mænads who rent in sunder the living limbs of Orpheus. We seem to hear about her the beat and clash of the terrible timbrels, the music that Æschylus set to verse, the music that made mad, the upper notes of the psalm shrill and strong as a sea-wind, the "bull-voiced" bellowing under-song of those dread choristers from somewhere out of sight, the tempest of tambourines giving back thunder to the thunder,[1] the fury of divine lust that thickened with human blood the hill-streams of Cithæron.

It is no vain vaunt of the modern master's that he has given us in another guise one of these Æschylean women, a monstrous goddess, whose tone of voice "gave a sort of Promethean grandeur to her furious and amorous words," who had in her the tragic and Titanic passion of the women of the Eleusinian feasts "seeking the satyrs under the stars." And with all this fierce excess of imaginative colour and tragic intonation, the woman is modern and possible; she might be now alive, and may be. Some of her words have the light of an apocalypse, the tone of a truth indubitable henceforth and sensible to all. "You were not born with that horrible laugh on your face, were you? no? It must be a penal mutilation. I do hope you have committed some crime.—No one has touched me, I give myself up to you as pure as burning fire, I see you do not believe me, but if you only knew how little I care!—Despise me, you that people despise. Degradation below degradation, what a pleasure! the double flower of ignominy! I am gathering it. Trample me underfoot. You will like me all the better. *I* know

[1] Æsch. Fr. 54 ('Ηδωνοί).

that.—Oh ! I should like to be with you in the evening, while they were playing music, each of us leaning back against the same cushion, under the purple awning of a golden galley, in the midst of the infinite sweetnesses of the sea. Insult me. Beat me. Pay me. Treat me like a street-walker. I adore you."

The naturalism of all that is absolute ; you hear the words pant and ring. Some might doubt whether her wild citations of old stories that matched her case, her sudden fantastic allusions to these at the very height of her frenzy, were as natural : I think they are. The great poet had a right if it pleased him to give his modern Mænad the thought and the tongue of a Sappho with the place and the caprice of a Cleopatra. Such a pantheress might be such a poetess ; then between fancy and fury we should have our Bassarid complete, only with silk for fox-skin. And this might be ; for the type of spirit can hardly be rare in any luxurious age. Perversity is the fruit of weariness as weariness is the fruit of pleasure. Charles Baudelaire has often set that theme to mystic music, but in a minor key : his sweet and subtle lyrics were the prelude to this grand chorus of the master's.

We have seen the soft fierce play of the incessant summer lightnings, between the deep sky full of passing lights and dreams, and the deep sea full of the salt seed of life ; and among them Venus arising, the final and fatal flower of the mystic heaven and the ravenous sea. Looking now from west to east, we may see the moon rise, a tender tear-blinded moon, worn thin and pure, ardent and transparent.

A great poet can perfect his picture with strangely few

touches. We see Virgilia as clearly as Imogen; we see Dea as clearly as Esmeralda. Yet Imogen pervades the action of "Cymbeline," Virgilia hardly speaks in crossing the stage of "Coriolanus." It is not easy to write at all about the last chapters of the book; something divine is there, impalpable and indefinable. I must steal the word I want; they are "written as if in star-fire and immortal tears." Or, to take Shakespeare's words after Carlyle's, they are "most dearly sweet and bitter." The pathos of Æschylus is no more like Dante's, Dante's no more like Shakespeare's, than any of these is like Hugo's. Every master of pathos has a key of his own to unlock the source of tears, or of that passionate and piteous pleasure which lies above and under the region of tears. Some, like Dante, condense the whole agony of a life into one exquisite and bitter drop of distilled pain. Others, like Shakespeare, translate it pang by pang into a complete cadence and symphony of suffering. Between Lear and Ugolino the balance can never be struck. Charles Lamb, we may remember, spent hours on the debate with a friend who upheld Dante's way of work against Shakespeare's. On which side we are to range the greatest poet of our own age, there can be no moment of question. I am not sure that he has ever touched the keys of sorrow with surer hand to deeper music than here. There is nothing in his work of a more heavenly kind; yet, or it may be because, every word has in it the vibration of earthly emotion; but through it rather than above, there grows and pierces a note of divine tenderness, the very passion of pity that before this has made wise men mad. Even more than the pathos of this close,

its purity and exaltation are to be noted; nothing of common is there, nothing of theatrical. And indeed it needed the supreme sweetness of Dea's reappearance, a figure translucent with divine death, a form of flesh that the light of heaven shines through more and more as the bodily veil wears thinner and consumes, to close with music and the luminous vision of a last comfort a book so full of the sound and shine of storm. With the clamour and horror yet in our ears of that raging eloquence in which the sufferer flings into the faces of prosperous men the very flame and hell-fire of his suffering, it needed no less than this to leave the mind exalted and reconciled. But this dew of heaven is enough to quench or allay the flames of any hell. There are words of a sweetness unsurpassable, as these: "Tout cela s'en va, et il n'y aura plus de chansons." And upon all there dwells the measureless and nameless peace of night upon a still sea. To this quiet we have been led through all the thunder and tumult of things fatal, from the tempestuous overture of storm and whirlwind; from sea again to sea. There is a divine and terrible harmony in this chorus of the play, secretly and strangely sustained, yet so that on a full reading we feel it, though at first sight or hearing it must be missed.

Of the master's unequalled power upon natural things, upon the elements we call inanimate, knowing even less the laws of their life than of ours, there is happily no need, as surely there are no words, to speak. Part of this power we may recognise as due to the subtle and deep admixture of moral emotion and of human sentiment with the mysterious action and passion of nature. Thus in

"Les Travailleurs de la Mer" the wind and the sea gain strength and depth from the human figure set to fight them; from the depth and strength of the incarnate spirit so doing and suffering. Thus in this book there is a new sense and a new sublimity added to the tempest by the remorse of men sinking at once under sin and storm, drowned under a double weight of deeds and waves.

Not even in that other book is the supreme mastery of nature, the lordship of the forces of things, more admirable and wonderful than throughout the first part of this. He who could think to describe might think to rival it. But of one point I cannot but take note; there is nothing, even at the height of tragic horror, repellent, ugly, hateful. It has been said there is, and will be said again; for how should there not be distorted eyes and envious tongues in the world? Indeed a pieuvre is no pleasant playfellow, the "tree of man's making" bears a fearful fruit, the monstrous maidenhood of Josiane is no sister to the starry virginity of Dea; but how has the great poet handled these things? The mutilation of a child's face is a thing unbearable for thought to rest on; but have we not seen first the face of a heroic soul? Far elsewhere than in the work of our sovereign poet must we look for the horror which art will have none of, which nature flings back with loathing in the bringer's face. If not, we of this time who love and serve his art should indeed be in a bad case. But upon this matter we cannot permit the blind and nameless leaders of the nameless blind to decide for us. Let the serious and candid student look again for himself and see. That "fight of the dead with the dark," that swinging of carrion birds

with the swing of the gibbeted carrion, might have been so done into words as to beget in us mere loathing; but how is it done here? The mighty manner of Victor Hugo has given to this ghastly matter something even of a horrible charm, a shocking splendour of effect. The rhythmic horror of the thing penetrates us not with loathing, but with a tragic awe and terror as at a real piece of the wind's work, an actual caprice of the night's, a portion of the tempest of things. So it is always; handle what he may, the touch of a great poet will leave upon it a spell to consume and transmute whatever a weaker touch would leave in it of repulsive.

Whether or not we are now speaking of a great poet, of a name imperishable, is not a question which can be gravely deliberated. I have only to record my own poor conviction, based on some study and comparison of the men, that precisely as we now think of those judges who put Fletcher above Shakespeare, Cowley above Milton, the paid poets of Richelieu beside Corneille, and I know not whom beside Molière, will the future think of those judges who would place any poet of his age by the side of Victor Hugo. Nor has his age proved poor—it has rather been singularly rich—in men and in poets really and greatly admirable. But even had another done as well once and again as the master himself, who has done so well as much? Had he done but half, had he done but a tenth of his actual work, his supremacy, being less incontestable, would no doubt have been less contested. A parsimonious poet calculates well for his own time. Had Victor Hugo granted us but one great play—say "Marion de Lorme," but one great lyric work—say

"Les Contemplations," but one great tragic story—say any one you please, the temptation to decry or denounce him by comparison would have been less; for with the tribe of Barkilphedro the strength of this temptation grows with the growth of the benefit conferred. And very potent is that tribe in the world of men and of letters.

As for me, I am not careful to praise or dispraise by comparison at all. I am not curious to enquire what of apparent or of actual truth there may be in any charge brought against the doer of the greatest things done, the giver of the greatest gifts given among men in our times. Goethe found his way of work mechanical and theatrical; Milton also lived to make oblique recantation of his early praise of Shakespeare; we may, and should, wish this otherwise: yet none the less are they all great men. It may be there is perceptible in Victor Hugo something too much of positive intention, of prepense application, of composition and forethought: what if there were? One question stands forth first and last; is the work done good work and great, or not? A lesser question is this; these that we find to be faults, are they qualities separable from the man's nature? could we have his work without them? If not, and if his work be great, what will it profit us to blame them or to regret? First, at all events, let us have the sense to enjoy it and the grace to give thanks. What for example if there be in this book we have spoken of errors of language, errors historical or social? Has it not throughout a mighty hold upon men and things, the godlike strength of grasp which only a great man can have of them? And for quiet power of hand, for scornful sureness of satiric truth, what can exceed his study of the

queen of England (Anne)? Has it not been steeped in the tears and the fire of live emotion? If the style be overcharged and overshining with bright sharp strokes and points, these are no fireworks of any mechanic's fashion these are the phosphoric flashes of the sea-fire moving on the depth of the limitless and living sea. Enough, that the book is great and heroic, tender and strong; full from end to end of divine and passionate love, of holy and ardent pity for men that suffer wrong at the hands of men; full, not less, of lyric loveliness and lyric force; and I for one am content to be simply glad and grateful: content in that simplicity of spirit to accept it as one more benefit at the hands of the supreme singer now living among us the beautiful and lofty life of one loving the race of men he serves, and of them in all time to be beloved.

1869

VICTOR HUGO: L'ANNÉE TERRIBLE.

The man who takes upon himself the task of commentary on a book of this rank feels something of the same hesitation and reluctance come upon him which fell upon the writer at starting. He cannot at once be sure whether he does right to go forward or not. It is not that he too feels the rising tide of the bitter waters of shame; it is not that he too sees a "star grow lesser in heaven." It is, if I may take up the poet's metaphor, that he sees the crowning star of a long night now dilated to a sun through the thunderclouds of the morning. He knows that this fire in heaven is indeed the fire of day; but he finds no fitting words of welcome or thanksgiving to salute so terrible a sunrise. Once more we receive from the hands of our supreme poet a book full of light and music; but a book written in tears and blood and characters of flame. We cannot but rejoice that it has been written, and grieve that ever it could have been. The child brought forth is visibly of divine birth, and his blood of the immortals; but he was brought forth with heartbreak and the pangs of "a terrible childbed." The delight we take in the majesty and beauty of this "mighty line" has been dearly purchased by the bitter occasion which evoked it. Yet it cannot but be with delight that we receive so great a gift as this from the chief poet of an age, and of an age

so full of light and storm, of high action and high passion, as is ours. For his hand has never been firmer, his note more clear than now;

ἔτι γὰρ θεόθεν καταπνείει
πειθὼ μολπᾶν
ἀλκᾷ ξύμφυτος αἰών·

and in these bitter and tragic pages there is a sweetness surpassing that of love-songs or songs of wine, a sweetness as of the roll of the book spread before Ezekiel, that was written within and without, "and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.—Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."

It would be well that all students of this book should read together with it, as complement at once and commentary, the memorable collection, "Actes et Paroles, 1870—1871—1872." By the light of that precious record, and by this light alone, can it be properly read. There all who will may see by what right even beyond the right of genius the greatest poet of his great nation speaks now to us as a prophet to his people: by what right of labour, by what right of sorrow, by what right of pity and of scorn, by what right of indignation and of love. None of those disciples who most honoured him in his time of banishment could have anticipated for their master a higher honour or a heavier suffering than those nineteen years of exile; but in his own country there was reserved for him a brighter crown of honour, with a deeper draught of suffering. To defend Paris against Versailles and against itself, and to behold it wasted on the one hand with fire which was quenched on the other hand in blood: to cast from him the obloquy of men who refused to hear his

defence of Garibaldi for the offence of coming to their aid, and to pass at once from the clamour of the Assembly to the silence of sudden death, beside the corpse of a beloved son; to offer shelter to his enemies, and to be hunted from that shelter himself: these were things he had yet to do and to endure.

The poem opens with a prelude at once prophetic and satiric, tender and wise and full of noble scorn and nobler pity; the verse which sets a crown on the head of the people and a brand on the face of the mob is such as it is given but to one man in an age to write, and that by no means in every age. Then, for the first and fatal month of August 1870, we have a poem terrible as the occasion which called it forth, fit alike to serve as prologue to the poems of the months which follow or as an epilogue to the "Châtiments" which went before. That nothing after Sedan might be wanting to the fugitive assassin once elect of the party of Barabbas, the scourge of imperishable verse is added to the branding-iron of historic fact.

The poems of the siege at once demand and defy commentary; they should be studied in their order as parts of one tragic symphony. From the overture which tells of the old glory of Germany before turning to France with a cry of inarticulate love, to the sad majestic epilogue which seals up the sorrowful record of the days of capitulation, the various and continuous harmony flows forward through light and shadow, with bursts of thunder and tempest and interludes of sunshine and sweet air. In that last poem for February we see as it were the agony of faith; before the sight of evil inseparable from

good, of good inextricable from evil, the rallying cry of hope seems for the moment, and only for the moment seems, to falter even on the lips which uttered that sovereign song of resurrection, great as the greatest old Hebrew psalm, which crowns and closes the awful roll of the "Châtiments." For that mighty hymn of a transcendant faith in the final conscience of the world called God, in the ultimate justice and universal vision of the eye and heart of things, we have but the grand unanswerable question :—

> "Qui donc mesurera l'ombre d'un bout à l'autre,
> Et la vie et la tombe, espaces inouïs
> Où le monceau des jours meurt sous l'amas des nuits,
> Où de vagues éclairs dans les ténèbres gliesent,
> Où les extrémités des lois s'évanouissent !"

In this tragic range of poems reaching from September to March there is an echo of all emotions in turn that the great spirit of a patriot and a poet could suffer and express by translation of suffering into song ; the bitter cry of invective and satire, the clear trumpet-call to defence, the triumphal wail for those who fell for France, the passionate sob of a son on the stricken bosom of a mother, the deep note of thought that slowly opens into flower of speech, and through all and after all the sweet unspeakable music of natural and simple love. After the voice which reproaches the priestlike soldier we hear the voice which rebukes the militant priest : and a fire as the fire of Juvenal is outshone by a light as the light of Lucretius. In the verses addressed "to the Bishop who calls me Atheist," satire is dissolved in aspiration, and the keenest edge of scorn is molten in the highest ardour

of worship. The necessity of perfect disbelief in the incredible and ignoble for every soul that would attain to perfect belief in the noble and credible was never more clearly expounded or more loftily proclaimed. The fiery love and faith of the patriot find again and ever again some fresh glory of speech, some new splendour of song, in which to array themselves for everlasting; words of hatred and horror for the greed and ravin of the enemy and his princes

> "who feed on gold and blood
> Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed;"

words of wrath and scorn for the renegade friends who had no word of comfort and no hand for help in the hour of the passion of France crucified, but were seen with hands outstretched from oversea

> "Shaking the bloody fingers of her foes"

in the presence (as they thought it) of her corpse; words of living fire and light for love of the mother-land despised and rejected of men whose pity goes so far as to compassionate her children for the blush of shame to which their bitter fortune has condemned them, for the disgrace of being compelled to confess her for their mother:

> "Ah! je voudrais,
> Je voudrais n'être pas Français pour pouvoir dire
> Que je te choisis, France, et que, dans ton martyre,
> Je te proclame, toi que ronge le vautour,
> Ma patrie et ma gloire et mon unique amour!"[1]

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[1] I may cite here, as in echo of this cry, the noble words just now addressed by the greatest of American voices to "the star, the ship of France, beat back and baffled long—dim, smitten star—star

Others who will may have the honour of that privilege, to cast the weight of their hearts upon the losing side, to bring tribute of love and trust and reverence rather to failure than to success, to a republic bound in chains of iron than to an empire bound in chains of gold; but men who have the lineal pulse of French blood in their veins and the traditional memories of French kindred and alliance in their hearts, men to whose forefathers in exile for their faith's sake the mighty mother has once and again opened her arms for shelter in past ages, and fostered under her wings generation after generation as her children, cannot well read such words as these without a thrill of the blood and a kindling of the memory which neither the native of France nor the kinless foreigner can wholly share.

Side by side with the ardent denunciations of German

panting o'er a land of death—heroic land!" This prophecy is from the new song of Whitman:

> "Sure, as the ship of all, the Earth itself,
> Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,
> Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,
> Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty,
> Onward, beneath the sun, following its course,
> So thou, O ship of France!"

In the notes to his essay on "Democratic Vistas" Whitman for one expresses his recognition of Hugo living and Byron dead as "deserving so well of America;" which may be set against the impertinences of meaner American persons. It may likewise be remarked and remembered with pleasure that among the last printed words of Landor were two little stanzas of tributary verse in honour of the younger poet's exile. Amid the countless calumnies and insults cast upon that exile by French and English writers of the reptile kind, it is a relief to recall the greeting sent to it by a great English republican from the extreme verge of life, and from the shore of the new world by the first poet of American democracy

rapine and spoliation, of the hands found equally ready to seize a province or a purse, the purblind and devout incompetence of the defender who "would rather go with sir priest than sir knight," the soldier who for all his personal courage was "inclined to charge the saints in heaven with the task of keeping off the danger," is twice and thrice chastised with bitter and burning words of remonstrance. The keenest sarcasm however was in store for June, when an impertinence of this man's drew down a memorable retort on the general whose sallies were reserved for the writer; he was somewhat chary of them during the time of the siege; a general who might as well have taken the offensive against the enemy instead.

In sharp and sweet contrast to these stand the poems of a finer excellence, such as the letter of January 10th sent by balloon from the besieged city with its bright brave message of affection and confidence, full of the clear light laughter of French heroism not less than of its high and fiery faith. But for perfect delight and strong charm of loveliness we return at each reading to the domestic poems as to the crowning splendour and wonder of this great book. All students have always known Victor Hugo for the supreme singer of childhood; of its works and ways, its gladness and sadness, its earthly weakness and heavenly beauty, its indefinable attraction lying deeper than all reason can sound or all analysis resolve. Even after Shakespeare's portrait of Mamillius, and the divine cradle-songs of Blake, we are compelled to recognise in the living master the most perfect poet of little children. Circumstances have given to these present

poems a colour and a pathos, a gentle glory and a luminous tenderness, which only such a framework of time and place could give. Out of the strong has come forth such sweetness, out of the lion's mouth such honey, as no smaller or weaker thing can breed. Assuredly, as the Master has said himself in that majestic prose poem inscribed with the name of Shakespeare, the mightiest mountains can outmatch even for flowers the valleys whose whole business is to rear them ; their blossoming ravines and hollows full of April can beat the meadows at their own trade ; the strongest of singers are the sweetest, and no poet of the idyllic or elegiac kind can rival even on his own peculiar ground, for tender grace and delicacy of beauty, the most potent poets of a higher order, sovereigns of lyric and of tragic song. It is Æschylus, and not Euripides, who fills the bitter air of the Scythian ravine with music of wings and words more sweet than sleep to the weary, with notes of heavenly pity and love unsubduable by fear ; who shows us with one touch of terrible tenderness the maiden agony of Iphigenia, smiting with the piteous dart of her eye each one of the ministers of sacrifice, in dumb show as of a picture striving to speak to them ; who throws upon the most fearful scene in all tragedy a flash of pathos unspeakable, when Clytæmnestra bares before the sword of her son the bosom that suckled him as he slept. What Euripidean overflow of tears and words can be matched for its own special and much vaunted quality of tender and pathetic sweetness against such instances as these of the awful sweetness and intensity of the pathos of Æschylus? what wailing outcry "in the measures of

a hired Cissian mourner" can be likened to these brief words that sting like tears of fire? what milder note of the lesser gods of song has in it such penetrative and piercing gentleness as the softened speech of the thunder-bearer? Where, among the poets who have never gone up to the prophetic heights or down to the tragic depths of thought and passion, is there one who can put forth when he will verse of such sweet and simple perfection as the great tragic and prophetic poet of our own age? These are some of the first verses inscribed to the baby grandchild whose pretty presence is ever and anon recalled to our mind's eye between the dark acts of the year-long tragedy.

"Vous eûtes donc hier un an, ma bien-aimée.
Contente, vous jasez, comme, sous la ramée,
Au fond du nid plus tiède ouvrant de vagues yeux,
Les oiseaux nouveau-nés gazouillent, tout joyeux
De sentir qu'il commence à leur pousser des plumes.
Jeanne, ta bouche est rose ; et dans les gros volumes
Dont les images font ta joie, et que je dois,
Pour te plaire, laisser chiffonner par tes doigts,
On trouve de beaux vers, mais pas un qui te vaille
Quand tout ton petit corps en me voyant tressaille ;
Les plus fameux auteurs n'ont rien écrit de mieux
Que la pensée éclose à demi dans tes yeux,
Et que ta rêverie obscure, éparse, étrange,
Regardant l'homme avec l'ignorance de l'ange."

As in the look and action of a little child, so in this verse itself there is something of dim and divine pathos, sensible in the very joy of its beauty; something which touches men not too much used to the melting mood with a smiling sense of tears, an inner pang of delight made up of compassion and adoration before that divine

weakness. In the next month's verses addressed to the child in a time of sickness the pathos is more direct and tangible; more tender and exquisite than this it could not be. Again, in January, we have a glimpse "between two bombardments" of the growing and changing charm of the newly weaned angel, now ambitious to feel its feet on earth instead of the wings it left in heaven; on terms of household intimacy with an actual kitten, and old enough to laugh at angels yet unweaned.

> "À chaque pas qu'il fait, l'enfant derrière lui
> Laisse plusieurs petits fantômes de lui-même.
> On se souvient de tous, on les pleure, on les aime,
> Et ce seraient des morts s'il n'était vivant, lui."

With the one eternal exception of Shakespeare, what other poet has ever strewn the intervals of tragedy with blossoms of such breath and colour? The very verse seems a thing of flowerlike and childlike growth, the very body of the song a piece of living nature like any bud that bursts or young life that comes forth in spring. We are reminded of the interlude in Macbeth made by the prattle of Macduff's child between the scenes of incantation and of murder. Beside these the student will set in the high places of remembrance the lines on a shell falling where once were the Feuillantines — that garden of now immortal blossom, of unwithering flower and fruit undecaying, where the grey-haired Master was once a fair-haired child, and watched beyond the flight of doves at sunrise the opening in heaven of the chaliced flower of dawn—in the same heaven where now blazes over his head the horrible efflorescence of the bursting shell. "Here his soul flew forth singing; here before his

dreamy eyes sprang flowers that seemed everlasting. Here life was one thing with light; here, under the thickening foliage in April, walked his mother, whom he held by the skirt of her gown." Here the crowding flowers "seemed to laugh as they warmed themselves in the sun, and himself also was a flower, being a child."

After five months of siege comes a month of mourning, and after the general agony an individual anguish. Before this we are silent; only there rises once more in our ears the unforgotten music of the fourth book of the "Contemplations," and holds us dumb in reverence before the renewal of that august and awful sorrow.

Then come the two most terrible months of the whole hideous year; the strange vision of that Commune in which heroes were jostled by ruffians, and martyrs fell side by side with murderers; the monstrous figure of that Assembly on whose head lies all the weight of the blood shed on either side, within the city as without; the spectral unspeakable aspect of that fratricidal agony, as of some Dantesque wrestle between devils and lost souls in hell. Against the madness of the besieged as against the atrocity of the besiegers the voice of the greatest among Frenchmen was lifted up in vain. In vain he prophesied, when first a threat of murder was put forth against the hostages, of the murderous reprisals which a crime so senseless and so shameless must assuredly provoke. In vain he reclaimed for Paris, in the face of Versailles, the right of municipal self-government by her own council; in vain rebuked the untimely and inopportune haste of Paris to revindicate this right for herself in a season of such unexampled calamity and peril. On the

23rd of April he wrote from Brussels, where the care of his fatherless grandchildren for the time detained him, a letter to the *Rappel*, suppressed in their deaf and blind insanity by men who would not hear and could not see; in this letter he traced with the keen fidelity of science the disease to its head, and with the direct intelligence of simple reason tracked the torrent of civil war to its source; to the action of the majority, inspired by the terror and ignorance which ere long were to impel them to the conception and perpetration of even greater crimes than they had already provoked from the ignorance and passion of their antagonists. Above all, his faithful and fearless voice was raised before both parties alike against the accursed principle of reprisals. Now as of old, as ever throughout his life of glory and of good, he called upon justice by her other name of mercy; he claimed for all alike the equity of compassion; he stood up to plead for all his enemies, for all the enemies of his cause—to repudiate for himself and his fellow-sufferers of past time the use of such means as had been used against themselves—of banishment, imprisonment, lifelong proscription, murder in the mass or in detail. But the plague was not so to be stayed; and when the restored government had set itself steadily to outdo in cold blood the crimes of the conquered populace in its agony, the mighty voice which had appealed in vain against the assassins and incendiaries whose deeds had covered with just or unjust dishonour the name of the fallen party, who had confused in the sight of Europe their own evil works with the noble dreams and deeds of better men, and sullied with the fumes of blood and fire the once sublime and stainless

name of "commune"—this same voice was heard to intercede for the outcasts of that party, to offer a refuge to fugitives from the grasp of a government yet guiltier of blood than theirs. This infamous crime had not long to wait for its reward; a night attack on the house of the criminal with paving-stones and levers and threats of instant death. The year before, in answer to his appeal against invasion, certain bloodhounds of the press in Germany had raised such another yell as these curs in Belgium, bidding "hang the poet at the mast-head;" this time the cry was "*À la lanterne!*" Never was the sanguinary frenzy of the men of revolution, as exemplified in Victor Hugo, set off in stronger relief by the mild wisdom and moderation of the men of order, as exemplified in his assailants. Moved by this consideration, the Belgian government naturally proceeded to expel the offender; but with a remarkable want of logic omitted to offer the slightest reward to the brave men who had vindicated law and order by leading a forlorn hope against a fortress garrisoned by an old man, four women, and two children, one twenty months of age, one two years and a half. It is almost incredible that some months later the son of a minister, who had taken a leading part in this heroic work, was condemned to a fine of not less than four pounds sterling. Considering that once at least he or another of the crew did very nearly succeed in beating out the brains of the child in arms with a well-aimed flint, it is simply inexplicable that no mark of honour should have been conferred by royal or national gratitude on so daring a champion of law, so devoted a defender of social order against the horrors of imminent

anarchy. In a case of this pressing danger, this mortal peril, it is not every man who would have put himself forward at such risk to protect against a force so formidable the threatened safety of society ; not even the native land of these lion-hearted men can hope always to reproduce a breed of patriots ready to incur such hazards and undertake such feats as this in the sacred cause of their country. France has her Bayards and her Dantons, England her Sidneys and her Nelsons ; these are but common heroes, fit only to be classed with the heroes and patriots of old time, and such as their native soil might haply rear again at need ; but the most ardent and sanguine lover of his country in all Belgium can hardly hope that his fatherland will ever again bring forth a race of men worthy to be called the seed of such fathers as these ; men capable of exploits unexampled in the annals of vulgar patriotism, and from which the bravest of those above cited would assuredly have drawn back. It is hard to imagine those heroes of other countries inspired with the courage requisite to make war upon such enemies and under such conditions as could not suffice to daunt or divert from their purpose the heroes of Brussels.

Thus, as once before from Jersey, was Victor Hugo now driven from Belgium by a government which in the year of general shame contrived to attain the supreme crown of disgrace, to gather the final flower of ignominy ; a distinction not easy to win from so many rivals in the infamous race ; but theft and murder, under their magnified and multiplied forms of national robbery and civic massacre, are too common among a certain sort of

conquerors to be marked out for such especial notice as an act of this singular and admirable baseness. From all unclean things, from the mouths of the priesthood and the press, from the tongues that lap blood and the throats that vomit falsehood, rose the cry of mockery and hatred; if the preacher of peace and righteousness, the counsellor of justice and of mercy, were not a madman, he would be a ruffian; but the punctilious equity of episcopal journals gave him the benefit of the doubt. Yet for all this, as the poet found on leaving Brussels, it is not everybody who can impose the doom of exile; to ex pulsion the foreigner may condemn you, to exile he cannot. Exile is from the fatherland alone; a man's own country is the only one terrible to him who is cast out from it. In words full of the beauty of a divine sorrow the exile of many years has set down the difference.

From Vianden as from Brussels he continued to fulfil the duty of intercessor; to plead for the incendiary who could not read, for the terrible and pitiable woman dragged in triumph through the laughing and raging throngs of Versailles, dumb and bleeding, with foam-flecked lips fast locked in bitterness of silence, in savage deafness that nothing can move or shake, with the look as of one "aweary of the sun," with a kind of fierce affright in her eyes. For all such his appeal is made to their slayers on the old sacred plea, "Forgive them; for they know not what they do." Their wretchedness and their ignorance, their great want and their little knowledge, left them conscious of all that they suffered, unconscious of all that they did.

Out of the darkness of these most tragic poems of all,

one stands up with the light of a great deed on it, relieved against the rest in a glory as of sunrise. It is the poem which places on everlasting record the heroism of a child of twelve, condemned to be shot after all his companions, who asked leave to go first and take his watch home to his mother, promising to come back in time to die in his turn. They let him go, laughing at the infantine shallowness of the pretence; the little blackguard was afraid; off with you! He went, and returned. Even the soldiers of Thiers and Galifet could not slaughter that boy; the officer in command gave him his life, and the master-poet of his nation has given him immortality. The verses in which the greater of these two gifts is bestowed come like a draught of wine to the lips of one sick and faint amid all the pitiful and fearful record of evil inflicted and endured; they refresh, rekindle, re-illuminate the sunken spirit with a flush and thrill of high delight.

But it is possible to meet death with another kind of fearlessness than this, a quality which is not of the light but of the darkness; not with divine defiance as a hero, but with desperate indifference as a slave: nor is any society sound or any state secure which has found out no way to cure this dismal readiness to be killed off, this grim facility in dying. Upon all these to whom we have made life so hard that old men and children alike are ready to leave it without a word or tear, in tragic disdain, as of men strangers to their own death, whose grave was long since ready dug in their heart; upon all to whom we have refused the right of the body to its meat and the right of the spirit to its food, to whom we have given

neither bread nor light, corporeal nurture nor intellectual; upon the slaughtered and the banished, the hideous pits of quicklime into which the yet warm corpses of men and women were huddled, and the more hideous ships of transport between whose decks were huddled the living agonies of those condemned to the sufferings over which in the first years of the fallen empire men shuddered or wept, thinking of the innocent as well as the guilty lives crushed and worn out in that penal passage, killed by cold and heat and foul wretchedness—stifled in dens too low to stand upright in, with the sense overhead of the moving mass of the huge hurrying ship on its intolerable way; upon all these multitudinous miseries of all who do and suffer wrong, the single voice of charity and of reason invokes the equal dole and due of pity. At Vianden, amid all the sounds and shows of summer, the banished poet broods on the bloody problem that is not to be solved by file-firing and massacre at haphazard; all the light of the June days is reflected in his verse, but in his soul there is no reflection but of graves dug in the street for men shot down without trial, of murder feeling its way in the dark at random, and victims dispatched by chance instead of choice. With the intense and subtle beauty of this June landscape, where the witness could see no sympathy with the human trouble of the time, we may compare that former picture of the grim glory of a November sky after sunset, seen from the invested walls of Paris, when heaven did seem in harmony with the time, and the watcher saw there a reflection of war and mourning, from the west as white as a shroud to the east as black as a pall and alon the line of

horizon the likeness of a blood-red sword let fall from the hand of a god after some battle with a giant of equal stature.

For all this, notwithstanding, the watchword of the poem is hope, and not despair. "All this horror has hope in it; the ice-cold morning chills the sky-line as with fear; at times the day begins with such a shudder that the rising sun seems a masked attack.—The coming wave of the unknown has but a dull and livid transparence, into which the light comes but by degrees; what it shows us, seems to float and drift in folds immeasurable. The expansion of form and number appals us, and it is horrible to see to-day in the darkness what ought only to be seen to-morrow." By the parable of the robin's nest found in the hollow of the brazen mouth of the Waterloo lion, we are bidden see and hear the future in the womb of the present, hope in the jaws of despair, the song of peace in the very throat of war. Thus it is but natural that the poet should hearken rather to the higher voice than to the voice of expediency, to the counsellor whose name is Reason, whose forename is Interest; to the friendly admonition which reminds him that truth which is over true is all but falsehood; that in seeking the ideal you find the visionary, and become a dreamer through being too much a thinker; that the wise man does not wish to be unjust, but fears on the other hand to be too just, and seeks a middle course between falsehood, which is the first danger, and truth, which is the second; that Right in the rough is merely the ore from which in its crude state we have to extract the pure gold of Law; that too much light is as sure to blind you

as too much darkness, and if necessary you should not open the shutter more than halfway; that war and the scaffold are detestable in theory, and practically serviceable: that the shop must be set up against the temple, though the money-changers were once on a time driven out of it—for the fault of Jesus was to be something too much a God; that in all things wisdom is moderation, and from its quiet corner can remark and reprehend the flaws and excesses of the universe; as for instance that though the sun be splendid and the spring be sweet, the one has too many beams and the other has too many roses; this is the inconvenience of all things of the kind, and God is by no means free from exaggeration; to imitate him is to fall into perfection—a grave risk; all work is done better after a lesser model, and God does not always set the best example to follow. What is the use of being inaccessible? Jesus goes too far in declining to take the offer of Beelzebub into consideration; not that I say he ought to close with it; but it is stupid for God to be rude when the devil is civil; it would have been better to say, "I'll think it over, my good friend." After all, man is man; he is not wicked, and he is not good; by no means white as snow, but by no means black as coal; black *and* white, piebald, striped, dubious, sceptical. Seeing that men are small and their conscience dwarfish, the statesman takes their measure before he ventures anything: he astonishes them, but without any thunderclaps of genius or daring which might make their heads giddy; he gets them up prodigies proportioned to their size. The voice of wisdom then proceeds to recapitulate all the troubles which a contrary line of conduct has brought on the

scorner who still turns a deaf ear to her counsel: he has got himself stoned out of Brussels; the rattlesnakes of the press shake their rattles at him, the clerical and imperial gazettes have brought to light all his secret sins, drunkenness, theft, avarice, inhospitality, the bad wine and lenten fare set before his guests, and so forth; M. Veuillot is so witty as to call him pumpkin-head; it is all his own fault; to resist evil is doubtless a good thing, but it is a bad thing to stand alone; to rate and rebuke success, to be rough with those who have the upper hand, is really a blockhead's trick; all conquerors are in the right, and all that glitters is gold: the god of the winds is God, and the weathercock is the symbol of his worship.—And then there is always some little admixture of positive right in actual fact, some little residue of good discoverable in all evil, which it should be your business to seek out. If Torquemada is in power you warm yourself at the stake.—It is better to look for the real than for the true; the reality will help you to live, the truth will be the ruin of you; the reality is afraid of the truth.—A man's duty is just to make use of facts; you (says the voice of good counsel) have read it wrong: you are like a man who should take a star out of heaven to light him when a candle would serve better to see the way by. To this sound advice we see too plainly that the hearer on whom it is wasted prefers the dictation of the voice which speaks in answer, admitting that this low sort of light may have its partisans, may be found excellent and may really be useful to avoid a shock, ward off a projectile, walk well-nigh straight by in the dark cross-roads, and find your whereabouts among small duties; it serves publicans very

well as a lamp for their counters; it has on its side, very naturally, the purblind, the clever, the cunning, the prudent, the discreet, those who can only see things close, those who scrutinize a spider's web. But there must be somebody on the side of the stars ! somebody to stand up for brotherhood, for mercy, for honour, for right, for freedom, and for the solemn splendour of absolute truth. With all their sublimity and serenity, flowers as they are of summer everlasting, the shining constellations have need that the world they guide should bear them witness that they shine, and some man's voice be raised in every age to reassure his brothers by such cry of testimony uttered across the night; for nothing would be so terrible as an ultimate equality of good and evil, of light and darkness, in the sight of the supreme and infinite unknown world; nothing would bring so heavy an indictment against God as the mad and senseless waste of light unprofitably lost and scattered about the hollow deep of heaven without the direction of a will. This absence of will, this want of conscience in the world, the prophet of belief refuses to accept as possible. In the last poem of the book he rejects the conception of evil as triumphant in the end, of nature as a cheat so ghastly and so base that God ought to hide himself for shame, of a heaven which shelters from sight a divine malefactor, of some one hiding behind the starry veil of the abyss who premeditates a crime, of man as having given all, the days of his life, the tears of his eyes, the blood of his heart, only to be made the august plaything of treacherous omnipotence : it would not be worth while for the winds to stir the stormy tide of our lives, for the morning to

come forth of the sea and dazzle the blinded flowers with broadcast seed of diamond, for the bird to sing, or for the world to be, if fate were but a hunter on the trail of his prey, if all man's efforts brought forth but vanity, if the darkness were his child and his mother were the dust, if he rowed on night and day, putting forth his will, pouring out his blood, discovering and creating, to no end but a frightful arrival nowhither; then might man, nothing as he is, rise up in judgment against God and take to witness the skies and stars on his behalf. But it is not so; whence morning rises, the future shall surely rise; the dawn is a plighted word of everlasting engagement; the visible firmament is as it were a divine promise to pay; and the eternal and infinite God is not bankrupt.

In the strength of this faith a man may well despise all insult and all falsehood thrown up at him, all railing and mockery of his country or his creed from the unclean lips of church pamphleteers and other such creatures of the darkness and the dirt as in all lands alike are bred from the obscurer and obscener parts of literature. These are to him no more than the foul bog-water at its foot is to the oak whose boughs are the whole forest's dome, than the unlovely insects of the dust that creep beneath it are to the marble giant, august in its mutilation—to the colossal Sphinx of rose-tinged granite, grim and great that sits with hands on knees all through the night wherein the shaken palm-trees shiver, waiting for its moment to speak to the sunrise, and unconscious if any reptile beslaver its base. The god has never known that a toad was stirring; while a worm slides over him, he keeps in

silence his awful mystery of hidden sound and utterance withheld ; and the swarming of centipedes without number cannot take from Memnon, suddenly struck radiant, the great and terrible voice that makes answer to the sun. Those minute and multitudinous creatures who revile and defame the great—and thereby, says Blake, "blaspheme God, for there is no other God"—have no more power to disturb the man defamed than the judges who try the Revolution at their bar and give sentence against it have power to undo its work ; their wrath and their mourning are in vain ; the long festival of the ravenous night is over, the world of darkness is in the throes of death ; the dreadful daylight has come ; the flitter-mouse is blind, the polecat strays about squealing, the glowworm has lost his glory, the fox, alas, sheds tears ; the beasts that used to go out hunting in the evening at the time when little birds go to sleep are at their last gasp ; the desolation of the wolves fills the woods full of howling ; the persecuted spectres know not what to do ; if this goes on, if this light persists in dazzling and dismaying the night-hawk and the raven, the vampire will die of hunger in the grave ; the pitiless sunbeam catches and consumes the dark.—It is to judge the crimes of the sunrise that these judges sit in session.

Meantime, amid all the alternations of troubled hope with horror and the travail of an age in labour that has not strength to bring forth, there are present things of comfort and reassurance. "The children we have always with us ;" they are no more troubled about what we do than the bird that twitters beneath the hornbeam, or the star that breaks into flower of light on the black sky

line; they ask God for nothing but his sun; it is enough for little Jeanne that the sky should be blue. Over his son's and their father's grave the poet sees two little figures darkened by the dim shadow and gilded by the vague light of the dead. He speaks to them sweet and sublime words of blessing and of prophecy; of the glad heavenly ignorance that is theirs now, of the sad great knowledge that must be one day theirs. With the last and loftiest notes of that high soft music in our ears, we will leave off our labour of citation and exposition. "They will live to know," he says, "how man must live with his fate at the mercy of chance, in such fashion that he may find hereafter the truth of things conform to his vision of them here."

"Moi-même un jour, après la mort, je connaîtrai
Mon destin que j'ignore,
Et je me pencherai sur vous, tout pénétré
De mystère et d'aurore.

Je saurai le secret de l'exil, du linceul
Jeté sur votre enfance,
Et pourquoi la justice et la douceur d'un seul
Semble à tous une offense.

Je comprendrai pourquoi, tandis que vous chantiez,
Dans mes branches funèbres,
Moi qui pour tous les maux veux toutes les pitiés,
J'avais tant de ténèbres.

Je saurai pourquoi l'ombre implacable est sur moi,
Pourquoi tant d'hécatombes,
Pourquoi l'hiver sans fin m'enveloppe, pourquoi
Je m'accroîs sur des tombes;

Pourquoi tant de combats, de larmes, de regrets,
Et tant de tristes choses;
Et pourquoi Dieu voulut que je fusse un cyprès
Quand vous étiez des roses."

A poem having in it any element of greatness is likely to arouse many questions with regard to the poetic art in general, and certain in that case to illustrate them with fresh lights of its own. This of Victor Hugo's at once suggests two points of frequent and fruitless debate between critics of the higher kind. The first, whether poetry and politics are irreconcilable or not; the second, whether art should prefer to deal with things immediate or with things remote. Upon both sides of either question it seems to me that even wise men have ere now been led from errors of theory to errors of decision. The well-known formula of art for art's sake, opposed as it has ever been to the practice of the poet who was so long credited with its authorship, has like other doctrines a true side to it and an untrue. Taken as an affirmative, it is a precious and everlasting truth. No work of art has any worth or life in it that is not done on the absolute terms of art; that is not before all things and above all things a work of positive excellence as judged by the laws of the special art to whose laws it is amenable. If the rules and conditions of that art be not observed, or if the work done be not great and perfect enough to rank among its triumphs, the poem, picture, statue, is a failure irredeemable and inexcusable by any show or any proof of high purpose and noble meaning. The rule of art is not the rule of morals; in morals the action is judged by the intention, the doer is applauded, excused, or condemned, according to the motive which induced his deed; in art, the one question is not what you mean but what you do. Therefore, as I have said elsewhere, the one primary requisite of art is artistic worth; "art for art's

sake first, and then all things shall be added to her—or if not, it is a matter of quite secondary importance; but from him that has not this one indispensable quality of the artist, shall be taken away even that which he has; whatever merit of aspiration, sentiment, sincerity, he may naturally possess, admirable and serviceable as in other lines of work it might have been and yet may be, is here unprofitable and unpraiseworthy." Thus far we are at one with the preachers of "art for art;" we prefer for example Goethe to Körner and Sappho to Tyrtæus; we would give many patriots for one artist, considering that civic virtue is more easily to be had than lyric genius, and that the hoarse monotony of verse lowered to the level of a Spartan understanding, however commendable such verse may be for the doctrine delivered and the duty inculcated upon all good citizens, is of less than no value to art, while there is a value beyond price and beyond thought in the Lesbian music which spends itself upon the record of fleshly fever and amorous malady. We admit then that the worth of a poem has properly nothing to do with its moral meaning or design; that the praise of a Cæsar as sung by Virgil, of a Stuart as sung by Dryden, is preferable to the most magnanimous invective against tyranny which love of country and of liberty could wring from a Bavius or a Settle; but on the other hand we refuse to admit that art of the highest kind may not ally itself with moral or religious passion, with the ethics or the politics of a nation or an age. It does not detract from the poetic supremacy of Æschylus and of Dante, of Milton and of Shelley, that they should have been pleased to put their art to such use; nor does it de-

tract from the sovereign greatness of other poets that they should have had no note of song for any such theme. In a word, the doctrine of art for art is true in the positive sense, false in the negative; sound as an affirmation, unsound as a prohibition. If it be not true that the only absolute duty of art is the duty she owes to herself, then must art be dependent on the alien conditions of subject and of aim; whereas she is dependent on herself alone, and on nothing above her or beneath; by her own law she must stand or fall, and to that alone she is responsible; by no other law can any work of art be condemned, by no other plea can it be saved. But while we refuse to any artist on any plea the license to infringe in the least article the letter of this law, to overlook or overpass it in the pursuit of any foreign purpose, we do not refuse to him the liberty of bringing within the range of it any subject that under these conditions may be so brought and included within his proper scope of work. This liberty the men who take "art for art" as their motto, using the words in an exclusive sense, would refuse to concede; they see with perfect clearness and accuracy that art can never be a "handmaid" of any "lord," as the moralist, pietist, or politician would fain have her be; and therefore they will not allow that she can properly be even so much as an ally of anything else. So on the one side we have the judges who judge of art by her capacity to serve some other good end than the production of good work; these would leave us for instance King John, but would assuredly deprive us of As You Like It; the national devotion and patriotic fire of King Henry V. would suffice in their estimation to set it far above the

sceptic and inconclusive meditations of Hamlet, the pointless and aimless beauty of A Midsummer Night's Dream. On the other side we have the judges who would ostracise every artist found guilty of a moral sense, of the political faith or the religious emotion of patriots and heroes; whose theory would raze the Persæ from the scroll of Æschylus, and leave us nothing of Dante but the Vita Nuova, of Milton but the Allegro and Penseroso, of Shelley but the Skylark and the Cloud. In consistency the one order of fanatics would expel from the poetic commonwealth such citizens as Coleridge and Keats, the other would disfranchise such as Burns and Byron. The simple truth is that the question at issue between them is that illustrated by the old child's parable of the gold and silver shield. Art is one, but the service of art is diverse. It is equally foolish to demand of a Goethe, a Keats, or a Coleridge, the proper and natural work of a Dante, a Milton, or a Shelley, as to invert the demand; to arraign the Divina Commedia in the name of Faust, the Sonnet on the Massacres in Piedmont in the name of the Ode on a Grecian Urn, or the Ode to Liberty in the name of Kubla Khan. I know nothing stranger in the history of criticism than the perversity even of eminent and exquisite critics in persistent condemnation of one great artist for his deficiency in the qualities of another. It is not that critics of the higher kind expect to gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles; but they are too frequently surprised and indignant that they cannot find grapes on a fig-tree or figs on a vine. M. Auguste Vacquerie has remarked before me on this unreasonable expectation and consequent irritation of the critical mind, with his usual

bright and swift sense of the truth—a quality which we are sure to find when a good artist has occasion to speak of his own art and the theories current with respect to it. In this matter proscription and prescription are alike unavailing; it is equally futile to bid an artist forego the natural bent of his genius or to bid him assume the natural office of another. If the spirit or genius proper to himself move him for instance to write political poetry, he will write it; if it bid him abstain from any such theme and write only on personal or ideal subjects, then also he will obey; or if ever he attempt to force his genius into unnatural service, constrain it to some alien duty, the most praiseworthy purpose imaginable will not suffice to put life or worth into the work so done. Art knows nothing of choice between the two kinds or preference of the one to the other; she asks only that the artist shall "follow his star" with the faith and the fervour of Dante, whether it lead him on a path like or unlike the way of Dante's work; the ministers of either tribe, the savours of either sacrifice, are equally excellent in her sight.

The question whether past or present afford the highest matter for high poetry and offer the noblest reward to the noble workman has been as loudly and as long debated, but is really less debateable on any rational ground than the question of the end and aim of art. It is but lost labour that the champions on one side summon us to renounce the present and all its works, and return to bathe our spirits in the purer air and living springs of the past; it is but waste of breath for the champions of the other party to bid us break the yoke and cast off the bondage of that past, leave the dead to bury their dead,

and turn from the dust and rottenness of old-world themes, epic or romantic, classical or feudal, to face the age wherein we live and move and have our being, to send forth our souls and songs in search of the wonderful and doubtful future. Art knows nothing of time; for her there is but one tense, and all ages in her sight are alike present; there is nothing old in her sight, and nothing new. It is true, as the one side urges, that she fears not to face the actual aspect of the hour, to handle if it please her the immediate matters of the day; it is true, as the other side insists, that she is free to go back when she will to the very beginnings of tradition and fetch her subject from the furthest of ancient days; she cannot be vulgarised by the touch of the present or deadened by the contact of the past. In vain, for instance, do the first poetess of England and the first poet of America agree to urge upon their fellows or their followers the duty of confronting and expressing the spirit and the secret of their own time, its meaning and its need; such work is worthy of a poet, but no worthier than any other work that has in it the principle of life. And a poem of the past, if otherwise as good, has in it as much of this principle as a poem of the present. If a poem cast in the mould of classic or feudal times, of Greek drama or mediæval romance, be lifeless and worthless, it is not because the subject or the form was ancient, but because the poet was inadequate to his task, incompetent to do better than a flat and feeble imitation; had he been able to fill the old types of art with new blood and breath, the remoteness of subject and the antiquity of form would in no wise have impaired the worth and reality of his work; he

would have brought close to us the far-off loveliness and renewed for us the ancient life of his models, not by mechanical and servile transcript as of a copying clerk, but by loving and reverent emulation as of an original fellow-craftsman. No form is obsolete, no subject out of date, if the right man be there to rehandle it. To the question "Can these bones live?" there is but one answer; if the spirit and breath of art be breathed upon them indeed, and the voice prophesying upon them be indeed the voice of a prophet, then assuredly will the bones "come together, bone to his bone;" and the sinews and the flesh will come up upon them, and the skin cover them above, and the breath come into them, and they will live. For art is very life itself, and knows nothing of death; she is absolute truth, and takes no care of fact; she sees that Achilles and Ulysses are even now more actual by far than Wellington and Talleyrand; not merely more noble and more interesting as types and figures, but more positive and real; and thus it is (as Victor Hugo has himself so finely instanced it) "that Trimalchio is alive, while the late M. Romieu is dead." Vain as is the warning of certain critics to beware of the present and abstain from its immediate vulgarities and realities, not less vain, however nobly meant or nobly worded, is the counter admonition to "mistrust the poet" who "trundles back his soul" some centuries to sing of chiefs and ladies "as dead as must be, for the greater part, the poems made on their heroic bones;" for if he be a poet indeed, these will at once be reclothed with instant flesh and reinspired with immediate breath, as present and as true, as palpable and as precious, as any-

thing most near and real; and if the heroic bones be still fleshless and the heroic poems lifeless, the fault is not in the bones but in the poems, not in the theme but in the singer. As vain it is, not indeed to invite the muse to new spheres and fresher fields whither also she will surely and gladly come, but to bid her "migrate from Greece and Ionia, cross out those immensely overpaid accounts, that matter of Troy, and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas', Odysseus' wanderings;" forsake her temples and castles of old for the new quarters which doubtless also suit her well and make her welcome; for neither epic nor romance of chivalrous quest or classic war is obsolete yet, or ever can be; there is nothing in the past extinct; no scroll is "closed for ever," no legend or vision of Hellenic or feudal faith "dissolved utterly like an exhalation:" all that ever had life in it has life in it for ever; those themes only are dead which never were other than dead. "She has left them all, and is here;" so the prophet of the new world vaunts himself in vain; she is there indeed, as he says, "by thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismayed—smiling and pleased, with palpable intent to stay;" but she has not needed for that to leave her old abodes; she is not a dependent creature of time or place, "servile to all the skiey influences;" she need not climb mountains or cross seas to bestow on all nations at once the light of her countenance; she is omnipresent and eternal, and forsakes neither Athens nor Jerusalem, Camelot nor Troy, Argonaut nor Crusader, to dwell as she does with equal good-will among modern appliances in London and New York. All times and all places are one to her; the stuff she deals with is eternal, and eter-

nally the same; no time or theme is inapt for her, no past or present preferable.

We do not therefore rate this present book higher or lower because it deals with actual politics and matter of the immediate day. It is true that to all who put their faith and hope in the republican principle it must bring comfort and encouragement, a sense of strength and a specialty of pleasure, quite apart from the delight in its beauty and power; but it is not on this ground that we would base its claim to the reverent study and thankful admiration of men. The first and last thing to be noted in it is the fact of its artistic price and poetic greatness. Those who share the faith and the devotion of the writer have of course good reason to rejoice that the first poet of a great age, the foremost voice of a great nation, should speak for them in the ears of the world; that the highest poetry of their time should take up the cause they have at heart, and set their belief to music. To have with us Victor Hugo in the present as we have Milton and Shelley in the past is not a matter to be lightly prized. Whether or not we may be at one with the master-singer on all points is a matter of less weight; whether we have learnt to look to Rome or to Paris, regenerate and redeemed from imperial or sacerdotal damnation, for the future light and model of republican Europe, we can receive with equal sympathy the heroic utterance of the greatest Frenchman's trust in the country and the city of the Revolution. Not now, after so many days of darkness, after so many stages of terror and pity, can any lover of France be inclined to cavil at the utmost expression of loyalty, the utmost passion of worship,

which the first of her sons may offer in the time of her sore need. All men's mouths were opened against the sins and shames of Paris; stricken of her enemies, forsaken of her friends, the great city was naked to all assault of hostile hands or tongues; she was denied and renounced of Europe; it was time for the poet to take her part. We need not recall, though we cannot but remember, the source of all her ills; the first and foulest crime of a fruitful and baneful series, the murder of the Roman republic by the hands of French republicans; a crime which naturally and perforce brought forth at once its counterpart and its retribution in the minor though monstrous crime of December; which overthrew the triumvirate in Rome, and founded the empire in Paris. For that infamous expedition against right and freedom the nation which perpetrated and the nations which permitted it have since had heavily to pay. Not from the chief criminal alone, but from all accomplices who stood silent by to watch with folded hands the violation of all international conscience and the consummation of all international treason, has time exacted the full price of blood in blood and gold and shame. For the commission by France and the condonation by Europe of the crime which reinthralled a people and reinstalled a priesthood, even the infliction of the second empire was not found too costly an atonement to be exacted by the terrible equity of fate. But that the scourge fell first and heaviest on those Frenchmen who had protested and struggled with all the strength of their conscience and their soul against the sin and the shame of their country, men might have watched almost "with a bitter and severe

delight" the assassination in its turn of republican France while yet red-handed from the blood of republican Rome. But it was not for the greatest of those among her sons who had resisted that execrable wrong, and being innocent of bloodguiltiness had suffered in expiation of it for nineteen years of exile—it was not for Hugo, and it is not for us, to cast in her teeth the reproach of her sin now that it has been atoned for by a heroic agony. Yet in reading these ardent and profuse invocations of France as prophetess and benefactress, fountain of light and symbol of right, we must feel now and then that some recognition of past wrong-doing, some acknowledgment of treason and violence done against the right and the light of the world, would have added weight and force to the expression of a patriotism which in default of it may be open to the enemy's charge of vulgar and uncandid partisanship, of blind and one-sided provinciality. From these as from all other charges of narrowness or shallowness, want of culture, of judgment, and of temperance, we would fain see the noble ardour and loving passion of his faith as demonstrably clear in all men's eyes as in the main it is at bottom to those who can read it aright. To have admitted that the empire was not simply a crime and a shame imposed on France as though by accident, but an inevitable indemnity demanded for her sin against her own high mission and honour, for the indulgence of greed and envy, of the lust after mean renown and unrighteous power which is the deformed and vicious parody of that virtue of patriotism whose name it takes in vain to make it hateful, of the arrogant and rancorous jealousy which impelled her baser politicians to play the

game of the Catholic faction and let loose upon free Italy the soldiers of the Republic as the bloodhounds of the Church—to have avowed and noted this as the first and strongest link in the fatal chain of cause and effect wound up from Mentana to Sedan, could but have given fresh point and fresh profit to the fiery proclamation of France rearisen and redeemed. Then the philosophy and patriotism of the poet would not have been liable to the imputation of men who are now led to confound them with the common cries and conceits of that national egotism which has led to destruction the purblind and rapacious policy of sword-play and tongue-play. As it is, if ever tempted to find fault with the violence of devotion which insists on exalting above all names the name of Paris—Paris entire, and Paris alone—without alloy or reserve of blame or regret for its follies and falsities, its windy vanities and rootless restless mobility of mind, to qualify the praise of its faith and ardour in pursuit of the light, we may do well to consider that this hymn of worship is raised rather to the ideal city, the archetypal nation, the symbolic people, of which he has prophesied in that noble dithyrambic poem in prose prefixed originally to the book called "Paris Guide." Whether or not that prophecy be accepted as a prediction, the speaker cannot fairly be accused of making his voice the mere echo of the blatant ignorance and strident self-assertion of the platform. Not but that some sharper word of warning or even of rebuke might perhaps have profitably tempered the warmth of his loyal and filial acclamation. With this, and with some implied admission of those good as well as evil elements in the composition

of the German empire and army which gave his enemies their strength, the intellectual and historical aspect of the poem would be complete and unassailable. From all other points of view it stands out in perfect unity of relief, as an absolute type of what poetry can do with a tragic or epic subject of the poet's own time. For a continuous epic or tragedy he gives us in appearance a series of lyric episodes which once completed and harmonized are seen to fulfil the conditions and compose the structure of a great and single work of art. Thus only can such a work be done in simple and sensible accordance with that unwritten law of right which is to the artist as a natural and physical instinct.

We accept then without reserve this great gift, for which the student can pay but thanks to the master whose payment from the world is the hatred of base men and the love of noble. In the mighty roll of his works we recognise at once that it must hold a high place for ever. That intense moral passion which may elsewhere have overflowed the bounds and "o'er-informed the tenement" of drama or romance has here a full vent in its proper sphere. This sovereign quality of the prophet is a glorious and dangerous quality for a poet. The burning impulse and masterful attraction of the soul towards ideas of justice and mercy, which make a man dedicate his genius to the immediate office of consolation and the immediate service of right, must be liable at times to divert the course of his work and impair the process of his art. To those who accused him of not imitating in his plays the method of that supreme dramatist in whom he professed his faith, Victor Hugo

has well answered that it was not his part to imitate Shakespeare or any man; that the proof of vitality and value in the modern drama was that it had a life and a form, a body and a soul of its own. Nevertheless we may notice, with all reverence for the glorious dramatic work and fame of the first poet of our age, that on one point he might in some men's judgment have done well to follow as far as was possible to his own proper genius the method of Shakespeare. The ideal dramatist, an archetype once incarnate and made actual in the greatest of all poets, has no visible preferences; in his capacity of artist he is incapable of personal indignation or predilection; as Keats with subtle truth and sovereign insight has remarked, he "has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen." [1] For the time being, throughout the limits of his design, he maintains in awful equanimity of apparent abstraction the high indifference of nature or of God. Evil and good, and things and men, are in his hands as clay in the potter's, and he moulds them to the use and purpose of his art alone. What men are, and what their doings and their sufferings, he shows you face to face, and not as in a glass darkly; to you he leaves it to comment on the action and passion set before you, to love or hate, applaud or condemn, the agents and the patients of his mundane scheme, wide as time and space, hell-deep and heaven-high. It is for you, if you please, to take part with Imogen or Desdemona against Iago or Iachimo, with Arthur or Cordelia against Goneril or King John; he is for all men, inasmuch as all are creatures and parcels of himself as artist, and of

[1] *Life and Letters of John Keats*, vol. i. p. 221, ed. 1848.

that art which "itself is nature;" he is not more for Brutus than for Antony, for Portia or Volumnia than for Cleopatra. This supreme office, it is evident, can scarcely be fulfilled by a poet of whom it is possible for his most loving disciple and the son of his adoption to say, as Auguste Vacquerie has said of Victor Hugo, that all his works are acts of public virtue and charity, that his books are consecrated to the study and the relief of all sufferings, that his plays are dedicated to all the outcast and disinherited of the world. It is the general presence and predominance of this predeterminate and prepense design which has exposed his marvellous work to the charge of too deliberate and mechanical preparation, too studious premeditation of effect, too careful preoccupation of result. This in fact is the sum and sense of those imputations of calculated extravagance or preconcerted pathos and puppetry of passion done to order, outer heat of artificial fire with inner frost of spiritual cold, cast upon him by the only two famous men, among many infamous and obscure, who have attempted to impugn his greatness. But the most devout believer in Goethe's or in Heine's judgment, if not blind as well as devout, must allow that the edge of their criticism is somewhat blunted by the fact that in the same breath they decry with loud and acrid violence of accent the man generally acknowledged as chief poet of his age and country, and extol in his place the names of such other Frenchmen as no countryman of their own outside their private social set or literary party could hear cited as his rivals without a smile. If fault be found in our hearing by any critic of general note and repute with some alleged shortcoming in the genius or defect in the workmanship of

Shakespeare, of Michel Angelo, or of Handel, the force of the objection will be somewhat taken off when we find that the eminent fault-finder proposes to exalt in their stead as preferable objects of worship the works of Racine, of Guido, or of Rossini; and in like manner we are constrained to think less of the objections taken to Hugo by the Jupiter of Weimar and the Aristophanes of Germany, when we find that Goethe offers us as a substitute for his Titanic sculptures the exquisite jewellery and faultless carvings of Prosper Mérimée; as though one should offer to supplant the statuary "in that small chapel of the dim St. Laurence," not by that of the Panathenaic series, but by the white marble shrine of Orcagna in which the whole legend of the life of Mary is so tenderly and wonderfully wrought in little; while Heine would give us, for the sun of that most active and passionate genius, its solar strength and heat, its lightning and its light, the intermittent twinkle of a planet now fiery as a shooting star, now watery as a waning moon—sweet indeed and bright for the space of its hour, and anon fallen as an exhalation in some barren and quaking bog; would leave to France, in lieu of the divine and human harmony and glory of Hugo's mighty line, the fantastic tenderness and ardent languor, the vacuous monotonous desire and discontent, the fitful and febrile beauty of Alfred de Musset.

But whether or not there be reason in the objection that even such great works as "Marion de Lorme" and "Ruy Blas" are comparatively discoloured by this moral earnestness and strenuous preference of good to evil, or that besides this alleged distortion and diversion of art

from its proper line of work, too much has been sacrificed or at least subordinated to the study of stage surprises conveyed in a constant succession of galvanic shocks, as though to atone for neglect or violation of dramatic duty and the inner law of artistic growth and poetic propriety by excess of outward and theatrical observance of effect; whether or not these and such-like deductions may be made from the fame of this great poet as dramatist or as novelist, in such a book as that now before us this quality is glorious only and dangerous no more. The partisanship which is the imperfection of a play is the perfection of a war-song or other national lyric, be it of lamentation, of exhortation, or of triumph. This book of song takes its place beyond question beside the greatest on that lyric list which reaches from the "Odes et Ballades" to the "Chansons des Rues et des Bois;" such a list of labours and triumphs as what other lyrist can show? First come the clear boyish notes of prelude, songs of earliest faith and fancy, royalist and romantic; then the brilliant vivid ballads, full already of supple harmonies and potent masteries of music, of passion and sentiment, force and grace; then the auroral resonance and radiance of the luminous "Orientales," the high and tender cadences of the "Feuilles d'Automne," the floating and changing melodies of the "Chants du Crépuscule," the fervent and intimate echoes of the "Voix Intérieures," the ardent and subtle refractions of "Les Rayons et les Ombres;" each in especial of these two latter books of song crowned by one of the most perfect lyrics in all the world of art for sweetness and sublimity—the former by those stanzas on the sound of the unseen sea by night, which have in them

the very heart and mystery of darkness, the very music and the very passion of wave and wind; the other by that most wonderful and adorable poem in which all the sweet and bitter madness of love strong as death is distilled into deathless speech, the little lyric tragedy of Gastibelza: next, after many silent or at least songless years, the pealing thunders and blasting sunbeams of the "Châtiments:" then a work yet wider and higher and deeper than all these, the marvellous roll of the "Contemplations," having in it all the stored and secret treasures of youth and age, of thought and faith, of love and sorrow, of life and death; with the mystery of the stars and the sepulchres above them and beneath: then the terrible and splendid chronicle of human evil and good, the epic and lyric "Légende des Siècles," with its infinite variety of action and passion infernal and divine: then the subtle and full-throated carols of vigorous and various fancy built up in symmetrical modulation of elaborate symphonies by vision or by memory among the woods and streets: and now the sorrowful and stormy notes of the giant organ whose keys are the months of this "Année Terrible." And all these make up but one division of the work of one man's life: and we know that in the yet unsounded depth of his fathomless genius, as in the sunless treasure-houses of the sea, there are still jewels of what price we know not that must in their turn see light and give light. For these we have a prayer to put up that the gift of them may not be long delayed. There are few delights in any life so high and rare as the subtle and strong delight of sovereign art and poetry; there are none more pure and more sublime. To have

read the greatest works of any great poet, to have beheld or heard the greatest works of any great painter or musician, is a possession added to the best things of life. As we pity ourselves for the loss of poems and pictures which have perished, and left of Sappho but a fragment and of Zeuxis but a name, so are we inclined to pity the dead who died too soon to enjoy the great works that we have enjoyed. At each new glory that "swims into our ken" we surely feel that it is something to have lived to see this too rise. Those who might have had such an addition to the good things of their life, and were defrauded of it by delay, have reason to utter from the shades their ghostly complaint and reproach against the giver who withheld his gift from the world till they had passed out of it, and so made their lives less by one good thing, and that good thing a pleasure of great price. We know that our greatest poet living has kept back for many years some samples of his work; and much as he has given, we are but the more impelled by consideration of that imperial munificence to desire and demand its perfect consummation. Let us not have to wait longer than must needs be for the gift of our promised treasures; for the completion of that social and historic trilogy which has yet two parts to accomplish; for the plays whose names are now to us as the names of the lost plays of Æschylus, for the poems which are as the lost poems of Pindar; for the light and sustenance, the glory and the joy, which the world has yet to expect at the hands of Victor Hugo.

1872.

THE POEMS OF DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.

When fate has allowed to any man more than one great gift, accident or necessity seems usually to contrive that one shall encumber and impede the other. It has been thought, rightly or wrongly, that even the work done by such supreme men as Michel Angelo and Leonardo was impaired on this hand or on that by the various and eager impatience of genius which impelled them alternately along diverging lines of life and labour. Be that as it may, there is no room to doubt that such a double-natured genius as was theirs lies open to a double kind of attack from the rancorous tribe of weaklings and dullards. The haters of either light or of any may say that there cannot be sunlight and moonlight in the same sky; that a double-gifted nature must be powerless to beget as to bear, sterile by excess of organs as by defect, "like that sweet marble monster of both sexes" beloved of Shelley as of Gautier: that the time and ardour of spirit and of hand spent on this way of work must be so much lost to that other way; that on neither course can the runner of a double race attain the goal, but must needs in both races alike be caught up and resign his torch to a runner with a single aim. Candid envy and judicious ignorance will mutually concede something;

the one, that he might have won the foot-race had he let the horse-race be; the other, that he might have ridden in first had he never tried his luck afoot. That assurance refreshes with the restorative of a false consolation the runners who fell impotent at starting or dropped lame at the turning-point. Hateful as the winner of a single prize must be to them, how can they bear—if shutting their eyes will save them the sight—to behold the coronation of the conqueror in all five heats? Nevertheless they have now and then to bear it as they may: though some take side with them who should know better, having won each a single crown in his own field, and being loth to admit that in that field at least they can be distanced by the best man in another.

In every generation that takes any heed of the art, the phrase of "greatest living poet" or (with a difference of reservation) "first of his age and country" is flung about freely and foolishly enough: but if more than mere caprice—be it caprice of culture or caprice of ignorance—is to go to the making up of the definition, we must decide what qualities are of first necessity for the best poet, and proceed to try how far the claimant can be surely said to possess them. Variety is a rare and high quality, but poets of the first order have had little or none of it; witness Keats and Coleridge; men otherwise greater than these have had much, and yet have fallen far short of the final place among poets held by these; witness Byron and Scott. But in all great poets there must be an ardent harmony, a heat of spiritual life guiding without constraining the bodily grace of motion, which shall give charm and power to their least work; sweetness that

cannot be weak and force that will not be rough. There must be an instinct and a resolution of excellence which will allow no shortcoming or malformation of thought or word: there must also be so natural a sense of right as to make any such deformity or defect impossible, and leave upon the work done no trace of any effort to avoid or to achieve. It must be serious, simple, perfect; and it must be thus by evident and native impulse. The mark of painstaking as surely lowers the level of style as any sign of negligence; in the best work there must be no trace of a laborious or a languid hand.

In all these points the style of Mr. Rossetti excels that of any English poet of our day. It has the fullest fervour and fluency of impulse, and the impulse is always towards harmony and perfection. It has the inimitable note of instinct, and the instinct is always high and right. It carries weight enough to overbear the style of a weaker man, but no weight of thought can break it, no subtlety of emotion attenuate, no ardour of passion deface. It can breathe unvexed in the finest air and pass unsinged through the keenest fire; it has all the grace of perfect force and all the force of perfect grace. It is sinuous as water or as light, flexible and penetrative, delicate and rapid; it works on its way without halt or jar or collapse. And in plain strength and weight of sense and sound these faultless verses exceed those of faultier workmen who earn their effects by their defects; who attain at times and by fits to some memorable impression of thought upon speech and speech upon memory, at the cost generally of inharmonious and insufficient work. No such coarse or cheap stuff is here used as a ground to set off the rich

surprises of casual ornament and intermittent embroidery. The woof of each poem is perfect, and the flowers that flash out from this side or from that seem not so much interwoven with the thread of it or set in the soil, as grown and sprung by mere nature from the ground, under inevitable rains and sunbeams of the atmosphere which bred them.

It is said sometimes that a man may have a strong and perfect style who has nothing to convey worth conveyance under cover of it. This is indeed a favourite saying of men who have no words in which to convey the thoughts which they have not; of men born dumb who express by grunts and chokes the inexpressible eloquence which is not in them, and would fain seem to labour in miscarriage of ideas which they have never conceived. But it remains for them to prove as well as assert that beauty and power of expression can accord with emptiness or sterility of matter, or that impotence of articulation must imply depth and wealth of thought. This flattering unction the very foolishest of malignants will hardly in this case be able to lay upon the corrosive sore which he calls his soul: the ulcer of ill-will must rot unrelieved by the rancid ointment of such fiction. Hardly could a fool here or a knave there fail to see or hope to deny the fullness of living thought and subtle strength of nature underlying this veil of radiant and harmonious words.

It is on the other side that attack might be looked for from the more ingenious enemies of good work: and of these there was never any lack. Much of Mr. Rossetti's work is so intense in aim, so delicate and deep in significance, so exuberant in offshoot and undergrowth of

sentiment and thought, that even the sweet lucidity and steady current of his style may not suffice to save it from the charges of darkness and difficulty. He is too great a master of speech to incur the blame of hard or tortuous expression; and his thought is too sound and pure to be otherwise dark than as a deep well-spring at noon may be even where the sun is strongest and the water brightest. In its furthest depth there is nothing of weed or of mud; whatever of haze may seem to quiver there is a weft of the sun's spinning, a web not of woven darkness but of molten light. But such work as this can be neither unwoven nor recast by any process of analysis. The infinite depth and wealth of life which breathes and plays among these songs and sonnets cannot be parcelled and portioned out for praise or comment. This "House of Life" has in it so many mansions, so many halls of state and bowers of music, chapels for worship and chambers for festival, that no guest can declare on a first entrance the secret of its scheme. Spirit and sense together, eyesight and hearing and thought, are absorbed in splendour of sounds and glory of colours distinguishable only by delight. But the scheme is solid and harmonious; there is no waste in this luxury of genius: the whole is lovelier than its loveliest part. Again and again may one turn the leaves in search of some one poem or some two which may be chosen for sample and thanksgiving; but there is no choice to be made. Sonnet is poured upon sonnet, and song hands on the torch to song; and each in turn (as another poet has said of the lark's note falling from the height of dawn)

"Rings like a golden jewel down a golden stair."

There are no poems of the class in English—I doubt if there be any even in Dante's Italian—so rich at once and pure. Their golden affluence of images and jewel-coloured words never once disguises the firm outline, the justice and chastity of form. No nakedness could be more harmonious, more consummate in its fleshly sculpture, than the imperial array and ornament of this august poetry. Mailed in gold as of the morning and girdled with gems of strange water, the beautiful body as of a carven goddess gleams through them tangible and taintless, without spot or default. There is not a jewel here but it fits, not a beauty but it subserves an end. There seems no story in this sequence of sonnets, yet they hold in them all the action and passion of a spiritual history with tragic stages and elegiac pauses and lyric motions of the living soul. Their earnest subtleties and exquisite ardours recall to mind the sonnets of Shakespeare; poems in their way unapproachable, and here in no wise imitated. Shakespeare's have at times a far more passionate and instant force, a sharper note of delight or agony or mystery, fear or desire or remorse—a keener truth and more pungent simpleness of sudden phrase, with touches of sound and flashes of light beyond all reach; Mr. Rossetti's have a nobler fullness of form, a more stately and shapely beauty of build: they are of a purer and less turbid water than the others are at times, and not less fervent when more serene than they; the subject-matter of them is sweet throughout, natural always and clear, however intense and fine in remote and delicate intricacy of spiritual stuff. There is nothing here which may not be felt by any student who can grasp the subtle

sense of it in full, as a just thing and admirable, fit for the fellowship of men's feelings; if men indeed have in them enough of noble fervour and loving delicacy, enough of truth and warmth in the blood and breath of their souls, enough of brain and heart for such fellow-feeling. For something of these they must have to bring with them who would follow the radiant track of this verse through brakes of flowers and solitudes of sunlight, past fountains hidden under green bloom of leaves, beneath roof-work of moving boughs where song and silence are one music. All passion and regret and strenuous hope and fiery contemplation, all beauty and glory of thought and vision, are built into this golden house where the life that reigns is love; the very face of sorrow is not cold or withered, but has the breath of heaven between its fresh live lips and the light of pure sweet blood in its cheeks; there is a glow of summer on the red leaves of its regrets and the starry frost-flakes of its tears. Resignation and fruition, forethought and afterthought, have one voice to sing with in many keys of spirit. A more bitter sweetness of sincerity was never pressed into verse than beats and burns here under the veil and girdle of glorious words; there are no poems anywhere of more passionate meditation or vision more intense than those on "Lost Days," "Vain Virtues," "The Sun's Shame;" none of more godlike grace and sovereign charm than those headed "New-born Death," "A Superscription," "A Dark Day," "Known in Vain," "The One Hope." And of all splendid and profound love-poetry, what is there more luminous or more deep in sense and spirit than the marvellous opening cycle of twenty-eight sonnets, which embrace and express

all sorrow and all joy of passion in union, of outer love and inner, triumphant or dejected or piteous or at peace? No one till he has read these knows all of majesty and melody, all of energy and emotion, all of supple and significant loveliness, all of tender cunning and exquisite strength, which our language can show at need in proof of its powers and uses. The birth of love, his eucharistic presence, his supreme vision, his utter union in flesh and spirit, the secret of the sanctuary of his heart, his louder music and his lower, his graver and his lighter seasons; all work of love and all play, all dreams and devices of his memory and his belief, all fuller and emptier hours from the first which longs for him to the last which loses, all change of lights from his midday to his moonrise, all his foreknowledge of evil things and good, all glad and sad hours of his night-watches, all the fear and ardour which feels and fights against the advent of his difference and dawn of his division, all agonies and consolations that embitter and allay the wounds of his mortal hour; the pains of breach and death, the songs and visions of the wilderness of his penance, the wood of desolation made beautiful and bitter by the same remembrance, haunted by shadows of the same hours for sorrow and for solace, and beyond all the light of the unaccomplished hour which missed its chance in one life to meet it in another where the sundered spirits revive into reunion; all these things are here done into words and sung into hearing of men as they never were till now. With a most noble and tender power all forms and colours of the world without are touched and drawn into service of the spirit; and this with no

ingenious abuse of imagery or misuse of figures, but with such gracious force of imagination that they seem to offer voluntary service. What interlude more radiant than that of the "Portrait," more gracious and joyous than the "Love-Letter," more tender than the remembered "Birth-Bond," more fervent than the memorial "Day of Love," more delicate than the significance of "Love's Baubles," more deep and full than the bitter-sweet "Life-in-Love," more soft in spiritual shade of changeful colour than "The Love-Moon," more subtly solemn in tragic and triumphant foresight than "The Morrow's Message," more ardent with finer fires and more tremulous with keener senses than the sonnets of parting, than "Broken Music" or "Death-in-Love," ever varied the high delight of verse, the sublime sustention of choral poetry through the length of an imperial work? In the sonnet called "Love-Sweetness" there is the very honey of pure passion, the expression and essence of its highest thought and wisdom; and in that called "He and I," the whole pain and mystery of growing change. Even Shelley never expressed the inmost sense and mighty heart of music as this poet has done in "The Monochord." There are no lyrics in our lyrical English tongue of sweeter power than the least of these which follow the sonnets. The "Song of the Bower" is sublime by sheer force of mere beauty; the sonorous fluctuation of its measure, a full tide under a full moon, of passion lit and led by memory to and fro beneath fiery and showery skies of past and future, has such depth and weight in its moving music that the echo of it is as a sea-shell in the mind's ear for ever. Observe the glorious change of note from the delicate colour of

the second stanza to the passionate colour of the third; the passage from soft bright symbols to the actual fire of vision and burning remembrance; from the shelter of soul under soul and the mirror of tears wherein heart sees heart, to the grasp and glow of

> "Large lovely arms and a neck like a tower"

growing incarnate upon the sight of memory; and again to the deep dim witness and warning, the foresight and regret which lighten and darken the ways of coming life. This is perhaps, for style at once ample and simple, the noblest song of all; yet it is but one of many noble. Among these others I find none which clings by itself so long and close to the mind as one outside their circle—the song of the sea-beach, called "Even So;" it dies out with a suppressed sigh like the last breath or heartbeat of a yearning weak-winged wind. "A Little While" is heavy with all the honey of foretasted sorrow, sweeter in its aftertaste than the joy resigned, with a murmur beyond music in its speech. The perfect pity of the two last lines has the touch on it of plain truth and patience;

> "I'll tell thee when the end is come
> How we may best forget."

In "Plighted Promise" and "Love-Lily" the white flame of delight breathes and trembles in a subtler air, with a sure and faultless charm of motion. I like the first stanza of "Sudden Light" better than the second and third, admirably as they are fashioned and set to the music of the thought: they have less seeming effusion of an instant insuppressible sense of memory; and the touches of colour and odour and sound in it are almost too fine in their

harmony to be matched with any later. There is not a more delicate note of magic nature in these poems. The tremulous ardour of "Penumbra" is another witness to the artist's mastery of hand; the finest nerves of life are finely touched; the quiver and ache of soul and senses to which all things are kindled and discoloured by half morbid lights of emotion give a burning pulse of melody to the verses. The same fear or doubt which here is attired in fancies of feverish beauty finds gentler utterance, again outside this circle, in "A New Year's Burden;" the tone and colour have always a fresh and sure harmony. Four poems in a different key from such songs are "The Sea-Limits," "A Young Fir-Wood," "The Honeysuckle," "The Woodspurge;" not songs, but studies of spirit and thought, concrete and perfect. The first of these has the solemn weight and depth in it of living water, and a sound like the speech of the sea when the wind is silent. The very note of that world-old harmony is caught and cast into words.

> "Consider the sea's listless chime:
> Time's self it is, made audible:
> The murmur of the earth's own shell."

This little verse also has the

> "Secret continuance sublime"

which "is the sea's end;" it too is a living thing with an echo beyond reach of the sense, its chord of sound one part of the multiform unity of mutual inclusion in which all things rest and mix; like the sigh of the shaken shell, it utters "the same desire and mystery" as earth through its woods, and water through its waves, and man through his multitudes; it too has in it a breath of the life im

measurable and imperishable. The other three of these studies have something of the same air and flavour: their keen truthfulness and subtle sincerity touch the same springs and kindle the same pulses of thought. The passionate accuracy of sense half blunted and half whetted by obsession and possession of pain is given in "The Woodspurge" with a bitterly beautiful exactitude.

In all the glorious poem built up of all these poems there is no great quality more notable than the sweet and sovereign unity of perfect spirit and sense, of fleshly form and intellectual fire. This Muse is as the woman praised in the divine words of the poet himself,

> "Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought
> Nor Love her body from her soul."

And if not love, how then should judgment? for love and judgment must be one in those who would look into such high and lovely things. No scrutiny can distinguish nor sentence divorce the solid spiritual truth from the bodily beauty of the poem, the very and visible soul from the dazzling veil and vesture of fair limbs and features. There has been no work of the same pitch attempted since Dante sealed up his youth in the sacred leaves of the "Vita Nuova;" and this poem of his namechild and translator is a more various and mature work of kindred genius and spirit.

Other parts of his work done here have upon them the more instant sign of that sponsor and master of his mind; there is a special and delicate savour of personal interest in the sonnet on the "darkness" of Dante,

sacred to the fame of a father made again illustrious in his children, which will be cherished with a warm reverence by all heedful students. The poem of "Dante at Verona" stands apart among the rest with a crown on it of the like consecration, as perhaps the loftiest monument of all raised by the devotion of a race of genius for two generations of noble work and love. All incidents and traditions of the great poet's exile are welded together in fusion of ardent verse to forge a memorial as of carven gold. The pure plain ease and force of narrative style melt now and then into the fire of a sad rapture, a glory of tragedy lighting the whole vision as with a funereal and triumphal torch. Even the words of that letter in which Dante put away from him the base conditions of return—words matchless among all that ever a poet found to speak for himself, except only by those few supreme words in which Milton replied to the mockers of his blindness—even these are worthily recast in the mould of English verse by the might and cunning of this workman's hand. Witness the original set against his version.

"Non est hæc via redeundi ad patriam, Pater mi; sed si alia per vos aut deinde per alios invenietur, quæ famæ Dantis atque honori non deroget, illam non lentis passibus acceptabo. Quod si per nullam talem Florentia introitur, nunquam Florentiam introibo. Quidni? nonne solis astrorumque specula ubique conspiciam? Nonne dulcissimas veritates potero speculari ubique sub cœlo, ni priùs inglorium, immo ignominiosum, populo Florentinæque civitati me reddam?—Quippe nec panis deficiet."

So wrote Dante in 1316; now partly rendered into English to this effect:—

"That since no gate led, by God's will,
To Florence, but the one whereat
The priests and money-changers sat,
He still would wander: for that still,
Even through the body's prison-bars,
His soul possessed the sun and stars."

These and the majestic lines which follow them as comment have the heart of that letter in them; the letter which we living now cannot read without the sense of a double bitterness and sweetness in its sacred speech, so lamentably and so gloriously applicable to the loftiest heir of Dante's faith and place; of his faith as patriot, of his place as exile. It seems that the same price is still fixed for them to pay who have to buy with it the inheritance of sun and stars and the sweetest truths, and all generations of time, and the love and thanks and passionate remembrance of all faithful men for ever.

This poem is sustained throughout at the fit height with the due dignity; nothing feeble or jarring disturbs its equality of exultation. The few verses of bitter ardour which brand as a prostitute the commonweal which has become a common wrong, the common goddess deformed into a common harlot, show a force of indignant imagination worthy of a great poetic satirist, of Byron and Hugo in their worst wrath. The brief pictures of the courtly life at Verona between women and rhymesters, jester and priests, have a living outline and colour; and the last words have the weight in them of time's own sentence.

"Eat and wash hands, Can Grande;—scarce
We know their deeds now: hands which fed
Our Dante with that bitter bread;

And thou the watch-dog of those stairs
Which, of all paths his feet knew well,
Were steeper found than Heaven or Hell."

No words could more fitly wind up the perfect weft of a poem throughout which the golden thread of Dante's own thought, the hidden light of his solitude at intervals between court-play and justice-work, gleams now and again at each turn of the warp till we feel as though a new remnant of that great spirit's leaving had been vouchsafed us.

Another poem bearing the national mark upon it may be properly named with this; the "Last Confession." Its tragic hold of truth and grasp of passion make it worthy to bear witness to the writer's inheritance of patriotic blood and spirit. Its literal dramatic power of detail and composition is a distinctive test of his various wealth and energy of genius. This great gift of positive reality, here above all things requisite, was less requisite elsewhere, and could not have been shown to exist by any proof derivable from his other poems; though to any student of his designs and pictures the admirable union of this inventive fidelity to whatever of fact is serviceable to the truth of art with the infinite affluence and gracious abundance of imagination must be familiar enough; the subtle simplicity of perception which keeps sight always of ideal likelihood and poetical reason is as evident in his most lyrical and fanciful paintings as in Giorgione's or Carpaccio's. Without the high instinct and fine culture of this quality such a poem as we now have in sight could not have been attempted. The plain heroism of noble naked nature and coherent life is manifest from

the first delicate detail to the last. The simple agony of memory inflames every line with native colour. A boyish patriot in hiding from the government finds a child forsaken in time of famine by her parents, saves and supports her, sets his heart towards hers more and more with the growth of years, to find at last the taint upon her of a dawning shame, of indifference and impurity—the hard laugh of a harlot on her lips, and in her bearing the dull contempt of a harlot for love and memory. Stabbed and stung through by this sudden show of the snake's fang as it turns upon the hand which cherished it, he slays her; and even in his hour of martyrdom, dying of wounds taken in a last fight for Italy, is haunted by the lovely face and unlovely laugh of the girl he had put out of reach of shame. But the tender truth and grace, the living heat and movement of the tragedy through every detail, the noble choice and use of incident, make out of this plain story a poem beyond price. Upon each line of drawing there has been laid the strong and loving hand of a great artist—and specially a supreme painter of fair women. In the study of the growing girl the glories of sculpture and painting are melted into one, and every touch does divine service;

> "The underlip
> Sucked in as if it strove to kiss itself;"

the face, pale "as when one stoops over wan water;" the "deep-serried locks," the rounded clinging finger-tips, and great eyes faint with passion or quivering with hidden springs of mirth,

"As when a bird flies low
Between the water and the willow-leaves,
And the shade quivers till he wins the light."

In what poet's work shall we find a touch of more heavenly beauty, a nobler union of truth and charm? and in what painter's a statelier and sweeter mastery of nature than here?

"Her body bore her neck as the tree's stem
Bears the top branch: and as the branch sustains
The flower of the year's pride, her high neck bore
Her face made wonderful with night and day."

The purest pathos of all is in the little episode of the broken figure of Love, given to the child by her preserver, and the wound of its dart on her hand; nothing in conception or in application could be tenderer or truer; nothing more glorious in its horror than the fancy of heaven changing at its height before the very face of a spirit in paradise, with no reflection of him left on it:

"Like a pool that once gave back
Your image, but now drowns it and is clear
Again,—or like a sun bewitched, that burns
Your shadow from you, and still shines in sight."

Admirable as it is throughout for natural and moral colour, the poem is completed and crowned for eternity by the song set on the front of it as a wreath on a bride's hair, of which I can hardly say whether the Italian or the English form be the more divine. The miraculous faculty of transfusion which enables the cupbearer to pour this wine of verse from the golden into the silver cup without spilling was never before given to man. All Mr. Rossetti's translations bear the same evidence of a power not merely beyond reach but beyond attempt of other

artists in language. Wonderful as is the proof of it shown by his versions of Dante and his fellows, of Villon's and other ballad-songs of old France, the capacity of recasting in English an Italian poem of his own seems to me more wonderful; and what a rare and subtle piece of work has been done here they only can appreciate who have tried carefully and failed utterly to refashion in one language a song thrown off in another. This is the kind of test which stamps the supremacy of an artist, answering in poetry to the subtlest successes of the same hand in painting. Whether or not there be now living a master in colours who can match the peculiar triumphs of its touch, there is assuredly no master in words. The melodies of these in their Italian form can never die out of the ear and heart they have once pierced with their keen and sovereign sweetness. This song would suffice to redeem the whole story from the province of pain, even though the poet had not left upon us the natural charm of that hope which comes in with death, that the woman grown hard and bad was indeed no less a lie, an error, a spectral show, than the laughing ghost of her forged by bodily pain and recollection.

By this poem we may set for contrast, in witness of the artist's clear wide scope of work and power, the "Burden of Nineveh;" a study of pure thought and high meditation, perhaps for sovereignty of language and strong grasp of spirit the greatest of his poems. The contemplation that brings forth such fruit should be a cherub indeed, having wings and eyes as an eagle's. The solemn and splendid metre, if I mistake not, is a new instrument of music for English hands. In those of its fashioner it

makes harmonies majestic as any note of the heights or depths of natural sound. No highest verse can excel the mighty flow and chiming force of its continuous modulation, bearing on foamless waves of profound song its flock of winged thoughts and embodied visions. We hear in it as it were for once the sound of time's soundless feet, feel for once the beat of his unfelt wings in their passage through unknown places, and centuries without form and void. Echoes and gleams come with it from "the dark backward and abysm" of dateless days; a sighing sound from the graves of gods, a wind through the doors of death which opened on the early world. The surviving shadow of the Bull-God is as the shadow of death on past and passing ages, visible and recognisable by the afterlight of thought. Of the harmonious might and majesty of imagination which sustains the "speculative and active instrument" of song, we might take as separate samples the verses on its old days of worship from kings and queens, of light from lamps of prayer or fires of ruin; on the elder and later gods confused with its confusion, "all relics here together;" on the cities that rose and fell before the city of its worshippers; of their desolation and its own in the days of Christ. The stanza on the vision of the temptation has a glory on it as of Milton's work.

> "The day when he, Pride's lord and man's,
> Shewed all earth's kingdoms at a glance
> To Him before whose countenance
> The years recede, the years advance,
> And said, 'Fall down and worship me:'—
> 'Mid all the pomp beneath his look
> Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke

> Where to the wind the salt pools shook,
> And in those tracts, of life forsook,
> That knew thee not, O Nineveh!"

And what more august and strenuous passion of thought was ever clothed in purple of more imperial speech than consummates and concludes the poem? as, dreaming of a chance by which in the far future this God, found again a relic in a long ruined city, might be taken for the God of its inhabitants, the thinker comes to find in it indeed "the God of this world" and no dead idol, but a living deity and very present strength; having wings, but not to fly with; and eyes, but not to look up with; bearing a written witness and a message engraved of which he knows not, and cannot read it; crowned, but not for honour; brow-bound with a royal sign, of oppression only and contraction; firm of foot, but resting the weight of its trust on clay:—

> "O Nineveh, was this thy God,
> Thine also, mighty Nineveh?"

A certain section of Mr. Rossetti's work as poet and as painter may be classed under the head of sacred art: and this section comprises much of his most exquisite and especial work. Its religious quality is singular and personal in kind; we cannot properly bracket it with any other workman's. The fire of feeling and imagination which feeds it is essentially Christian, and is therefore formally and spiritually Catholic. It has nothing of rebellious Protestant personality, nothing of the popular compromise of sentiment which in the hybrid jargon of a school of hybrids we may call liberalized Christianism. The influence which plainly has passed over the writer's

mind, attracting it as by charm of sound or vision, by spell of colour or of dream, towards the Christian forms and images, is in the main an influence from the mythologic side of the creed. It is from the sandbanks of tradition and poetry that the sacred sirens have sung to this seafarer. This divides him at once from the passionate evangelists of positive belief and from the artists upon whom no such influence has fallen in any comparable degree. There are two living and leading writers of high and diverse genius whom any student of their work—utterly apart as their ways of work lie—may and must, without prejudice or presumption, assume to hold fast, with a force of personal passion, the radical tenet of Christian faith. It is as difficult for a reasonable reader to doubt the actual and positive adherence to Christian doctrine of the Protestant thinker as of the Catholic priest; to doubt that faith in Christ as God—a tough, hard, vital faith which can bear at need hard stress of weather and hard thought—dictated "A Death in the Desert" or "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," as to doubt that it dictated the "Apologia" or "Dream of Gerontius:" though neither in the personal creed set forth by Mr. Browning nor in the clerical creed delivered by Dr. Newman do we find apparent or flagrant—however they may lurk, tacit and latent, in the last logical expression of either man's theories—the viler forms and more hideous outcomes of Christianity, its more brutal aspects and deadlier consequences; a happy default due rather to nobility of instinct than to ingenuity of evasion. Now the sacred art of Mr. Rossetti, for all its Christian colouring, has actually no more in common with the spirit of

either than it has with the semi-Christianity of "In Memoriam" or the demi-semi-Christianity of "Dipsychus." It has no trace, on the other hand, of the fretful and fruitless prurience of soul which would fain grasp and embrace and enjoy a creed beyond its power of possession; no letch after Gods dead or unborn, such as vexes the weaker nerves of barren brains, and makes pathetic the vocal lips of sorrowing scepticism and "doubt that deserves to believe." As little can it be likened to another form of bastard belief, another cross-breed between faith and unfaith, which has been fostered in ages of doubt; a ghost raised rather by fear than love; by fear of a dead God as judge, than by love of a dead God as comforter. The hankering and restless habit of half fearful retrospect towards the unburied corpses of old creeds which, as we need not Shelley's evidence to know, infected the spiritual life and disturbed the intellectual force of Byron, is a mirage without attraction for this traveller; that spiritual calenture of Christianity is a sickness unknown to his soul; nor has he ever suffered from the distemper of minds fretted and worried by gnatstings and fleabites of belief and unbelief till the whole lifeblood of the intellect is enfeebled and inflamed. In a later poet, whose name as yet is far enough from inscription on the canonical roll of converts, there was some trace of a seeming recrudescence of faith not unlike yet not like Byron's. The intermittent Christian reaction apparently perceptible in Baudelaire was more than half of it mere repulsion from the philanthropic optimism of sciolists in whose eyes the whole aim or mission of things is to make the human spirit finally comfortable. Contempt of such

facile free-thinking, still more easy than free, took in him at times the form of apparent reversion to cast creeds; as though the spirit should seek a fiery refuge in the good old hell of the faithful from the watery new paradise of liberal theosophy and ultimate amiability of all things.[1] Alone among the higher artists of his age, Mr. Rossetti has felt and given the mere physical charm of Christianity, with no admixture of doctrine or of doubt. Here as in other things he belongs, if to any school at all, to that of the great Venetians. He takes the matter in hand with the thorough comprehension of Tintoretto or Veronese, with their thorough subjection of creed and history to the primary purpose of art and proper bearing of a picture. He works after the manner of Titian painting his Assumption with an equal hand whether the girl exalted into goddess be Mary or Ariadne: but his instinct is too masterly for any confusion or discord of colours; and hence comes the spiritual charm and satisfaction of his sacred art. In this class of his poems the first place and the fairest palm belong to the "Blessed Damozel." This paradisal poem, "sweeter than honey or the honeycomb," has found a somewhat further echo than any of its early fellows, and is perhaps known where little else is known of its author's. The sweet intense impression of it must rest for life upon all spirits that ever once received it

[1] It is remarkable that Baudelaire always kept in mind that Christianity, like other religions which have a broad principle of popular life in them, was not and could not be a creature of philanthropy or philotheism, but of church and creed; and this gives its peculiar savour and significance to the Christian infusion in some of his poems; for such recollection is too rare in an age and country where semi-Christian sentiment runs loose and babbles aloud.

into their depths, and hold it yet as a thing too dear and fair for praise or price. Itself the flower of a splendid youth, it has the special charm for youth of fresh first work and opening love; "the dew of its birth is of the womb of the morning;" it has the odour and colour of cloudless air, the splendour of an hour without spot. The divine admixtures of earth which humanize its heavenly passion have the flavour and bloom upon them of a maiden beauty, the fine force of a pure first sunrise. No poem shows more plainly the strength and wealth of the workman's lavish yet studious hand. One sample in witness of this wealth, and in evidence of the power of choice and persistent search after perfection which enhance its price, may be cited; though no petal should be plucked out of this mystic rose for proof of its fragrance. The two final lines of the stanza describing the secret shrine of God have been reformed; and the form first given to the world is too fair to be wholly forgotten:—

> "Whose lamps tremble continually
> With prayer sent up to God,
> *And where each need, revealed, expects*
> *Its patient period.*"

Wonderful though the beauty may be of the new imagination, that the spirits standing there at length will see their "old prayers, granted, melt each like a little cloud," there is so sweet a force in the cancelled phrase that some students might grudge the loss, and feel that, though a diamond may have supplanted it, a ruby has been plucked out of the golden ring. Nevertheless, the complete circlet shines now with a more solid and flawless excellence of jewels and of setting. The sweetness and pathos

and gracious radiance of the poem have been praised by those who have not known or noted all the noble care spent on it in rejection and rearrangement of whatever was crude or lax in the first cast; but the breadth and sublimity which ennoble its brightness and beauty of fancies are yet worthier of note than these. What higher imagination can be found in modern verse than this?

> "From the fixed place of heaven she saw
> *Time like a pulse shake fierce*
> *Through all the worlds.*"

This grandeur of scale and sweep of spirit give greatness of style to poetry, as well as sweetness and brightness. These qualities, together with the charm of fluent force and facile power, are apparent in all Mr. Rossetti's work; but its height of pitch and width of scope give them weight and price beyond their own.

Another poem, based like this on the Christian sentiment of woman-worship, is worthy of a place next it. In the hymn headed "Ave" the finest passage is that on the life of the Virgin after the death of Christ; a subject handled by the painter as well as by the poet. Indeed, of the two versions, that in colour is even the lovelier and more memorable to all who may have seen it for gentle glory of treatment—for the divine worn face of the Mother, seen piteously sacred in the light struck by the beloved disciple, as the thick purple twilight steeping the city roofs and the bare hill-side which saw the stations of the cross fills with pale coloured shadows the still small chamber where she sits at work for her Son's poor. The soft fervour and faultless keeping of the poem give it that

final grace of a complete unity of spirit and style which is the seal of sacred art at its highest.

No choicer sample of Mr. Rossetti's delicate mastery of language—of his exquisite manner of speech, subtle and powerful and pliant to all necessities of thought—can be found than the verses invoking Love as the god of sleep to guide the shadow of the lover who invokes him to the dreams of the woman beloved. The grace of symbol and type in this poem has something of the passionate refinement of Shelley's. There are many several lines and turns of phrase in this brief space of which any least one would suffice to decide the rank of a poet: and the fine purity of its passion gives just colour enough to the clouds and music enough to the murmurs of the deep dreamland in which it moves.

With this poem we may class one sadder and as sweet, "The Stream's Secret;" the thread of thought is so fine, yet woven into so full a web of golden fancies and glowing dreams, that few will follow it at first sight; but when once unwound and rewoven by the reader's study of it, he will see the whole force and beauty of all its many byway beauties and forces.

The highest form of ballad requires from a poet at once narrative power, lyrical, and dramatic; it must hold in fusion these three faculties at once, or fail of its mark: it must condense the large loose fluency of romantic tale-telling into tight and intense brevity; it must give as in summary the result and extract of events and emotions, without the exhibition of their gradual change and growth which a romance of the older type or the newer must lay open to us in order; it must be swifter of step and

sharper of stroke than any other form of poetry. The writer of a first-rate tragic ballad must be yet more select in his matter and terse in his treatment of what he selects from the heap of possible incident, than Chaucer in the compilation of his "Knight's Tale" from the epic romance of Boccaccio, or Morris in the sculpture of his noble master-poem, "The Lovers of Gudrun," from the unhewn rock of a half-formed history or a half-grown legend. Ballads have been cut out of such poems as these, even as they were carven out of shapeless chronicles. There can be no pause in a ballad, and no excess; nothing that flags, nothing that overflows; there must be no waste of a word or a minute in the course of its rapid and fiery motion. Even in our affluent ballad literature there is no more triumphant sample of the greatness that may be won by a poem on these conditions than we find in the ballad of "Sister Helen." The tragic music of its measure, the swift yet solemn harmonies of dialogue and burden, hold in extract the very heart of a tragedy, the burning essence distilled from "Hate born of Love, and blind as he." Higher effect was never wrought out of the old traditions of witchcraft; though the manner of sorcery here treated be one so well known as the form of destroying a man by melting a waxen effigy of him before a continuous flame for the space of three days and nights, after which the dissolution of the fleshly body keeps time to a minute with that of the waxen. A girl forsaken by her high-born lover turns to sorcery for help in her revenge on him; and with the end of the third day come three suppliants, the father and the brothers of the betrayer, to whom he has shown the secret of his wasting

agony, if haply they may bring him back not life but forgiveness at her hands. Dying herself of anguish with him and with the molten figure of her making, she will remit nothing of her great revenge; body and soul of both shall perish in one fourfold death: and her answers pass, ever more and more bitter and ardent, through the harmless mouthpiece of a child. How the tragic effect is enforced and thrown out into fiery relief by this intervention of the boy-brother it needs no words, where none would be adequate, to say. I account this one of the artist's very highest reaches of triumphant poetry; he has but once in this book matched it for pathos, and but once for passion: for pathos in "Jenny," for passion in "Eden Bower." It is out of all sight or thought of comparison the greatest ballad in modern English; and perhaps not very far below it, and certainly in a high place among the attempts in that way of living Englishmen, we might class Mr. George Meredith's pathetic and splendid poem of "Margaret's Bridal-Eve."

There is exquisite grace of colour and sweetness in "The Staff and Scrip," with passages that search and sound pure depths of sentiment, and with interludes of perfect drawing; witness the sweet short study of the Queen sitting by her loom: but the air of the poem is too remote and refined for any passionate interest.

The landscape of "Stratton Water" is as vivid and thorough as any ballad can show; but some may wish it had been more or less of a compromise in style between old and new: it is now a study after the old manner too close to be no closer. It is not meant for a perfect and absolute piece of work in the old Border fashion, such as

were those glorious rescripts, full of the fiery ease which is the life of such poetry, which Surtees of Mainsforth passed off even upon Scott as genuine; and yet it is so far a copy that it seems hardly well to have gone so far and no further. On this ground Mr. Morris has a firmer tread than the great artist by the light of whose genius and kindly guidance he put forth the firstfruits of his work, as I did afterwards. In his first book the ballad of "Welland River," the Christmas carol in "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon," and that other, his most beautiful carol, printed with music in a volume of sacred verse, are examples of flawless work in the pure early manner. Any less absolute and decisive revival of mediæval form by inspiration of returning lifeblood and measured breath of life into the exact type and mould of ancient art rouses some sense of failure by excess or default of resemblance. This positive note of the past is not quite caught here, and the note struck is too like it to take its place without discord.

There is a singular force and weight of impression in the "Card-Dealer" which give it a distinct and eminent place among these lesser poems. The sharpness of symbol and solidity of incarnation with which the idea is invested bring it so close to us that the mere type itself assumes as it were a bodily interest over and above its spirit and significance; and the tragic colour and mystic movement of the poem are fitted to the dim splendour and vague ardour of life in it; whether the dealer be fortune or passion or ambition, pleasure or fame or any desire of man's, we see her mistress of the game in that world of shadows and echoes which is hers if ours.

Without the date appended, we might have guessed that the little cabinet poem called "My Sister's Sleep" was an early study. It has the freshness and clearness of first youth, with something of the hardness of growing outlines; the bodily form of verse has not yet learnt to melt and flow by instinct into the right way; yet with this slight sharpness and crudity there is a grace of keen sincerity and direct force which gives proof of no student's hand, but a workman's recognisable as born into the guild of masters. The fourth and three following stanzas have a brightness and intensity of truth, a fine and tender vigour of sentiment, admirable at any age; and the last have an instant weight of pathos and clear accuracy of beauty, full of prophecy and promises. In the same short-lived magazine into which the first flowerage of many eminent men's work was cast with such liberal and fruitful hands, there was another early poem of this their leader's and best man which he might as well have gathered into his harvest; a delicate and subtle study of religious passion, with the colour and perfume in it of the choral air of a cathedral, lit with latticed glories of saints, and tremulous with low music of burning prayers; the mystery of sense and ardour of soul in an hour made drunken with the wine of worship were wrought into expression of bright and sensitive words, full of the fiery peace of prayer and sightless vision of faith. This little sacred picture of the Father Hilary should have been here reframed, if only for the fine touches of outer things passing by as a wind upon the fervent spirit in its dream. Besides, it has its place and significance among the author's studies in the Christian style, near some of those

earlier works, so full of his special grace and spiritual charm, which belong to the same period, if not beside the highest of his sacred designs, such as the Passover and Magdalene here as it were engraved and put forth in print among the sonnets for pictures. All these are most noble, and give once more a magnificent proof of his power to bend and mould, to inflame and invigorate, to carve and colour the dead forms of words with a shaping and animating life. Among them all the most utterly delightful to me is that on Giorgione's divine and transcendant pastoral in the Louvre: which actually attains to the transfusion of a spirit that seemed incommunicable from one master's hand even to another's. In the verse as on the canvass there is the breathless breath of overmuch delight, the passion of overrunning pleasure which quivers and aches on the very edge of heavenly tears—"tears of perfect moan" for excess of unfathomable pleasure and burden of inexpressible things only to be borne by Gods in heaven; the sweet and sovereign oppression of absolute beauty and the nakedness of burning life; the supreme pause of soul and sense at the climax of their consummate noon and high tide of being; glad and sad and sacred, unsearchable and natural and strange. Of the sonnets on the writer's own pictures and designs I think that on Pandora to be the most perfect and exalted, as the design is among his mightiest in its godlike terror and imperial trouble of beauty, shadowed by the smoke and fiery vapour of winged and fleshless passions crowding from the casket in spires of flame-lit and curling cloud round her fatal face and mourning veil of hair. The sonnets on Cassandra translate with apt and passionate

choice of words the scheme of his greatest tragic design, his fullest and most various in vital incident and high truth of heroic life. The grand sonnet "on refusal of aid between nations" shows yet a fresh side and a most noble aspect of his great and manifold genius; its severe emotion and grave loveliness of ardent anger set a mark on it as of Dante's justice and judgment. "Autumn Idleness" is a splendid study of landscape, for breadth of colour and solemn brightness of vision worthy to stand by those great symbolic landscapes seen in the "House of Life," such as "Barren Spring" and "The Hill Summit;" and in "Beauty and the Bird" we have a sample of the painter's gladdest colour and sweetest tone of light. His full command of that lyric sentiment and power which give to mediæval poetry its clear particular charm is plain alike from the ending given to the "old song" of Ophelia and from the marvellous versions of Villon's and other French songs. The three sweetest of that great poet's who was the third singer of the Middle Ages and first vocal tongue of the dumb painful people in its agony and mirth and shame and strength of heart, are here recast in English gold of equal weight. The very cadence of Villon's matchless ballad of the ladies of old time is caught and returned. The same exquisite exactitude of translation is notable in "John of Tours"—the old provincial song long passed from mouth to mouth and at last preserved with all its breaks and lapses of sweet rough metre by Gérard de Nerval. His version of Dante's divinest episode, that of Francesca, I take to be the supreme triumph of translation possible; for what, after so many failures,—Byron's the dismallest failure of

all, and worst imaginable instance of perversion—could be hoped of any new attempt? But here the divine verse seems actually to fall of itself into a new mould, the exact shape and size of the first—to be poured from one cup into another without spilling one drop of nectar. Nay, so far beyond other men's is this poet's power of transfusion that as though to confute the Italian proverb against the treasons of translators he has wellnigh achieved the glory of reproducing a few lines even of Sappho, by welding two fragments into one song, melting two notes into one chord of verse. But though the sweet life and colour be saved and renewed, no man can give again in full that ineffable glory and grace as of present godhead, that subtle breath and bloom of very heaven itself, that dignity of divinity which informs the most passionate and piteous notes of the unapproachable poetess with such grandeur as would seem impossible to such passion. Here is a delicious and living music, but here is not—what can nowhere be—the echo of that unimaginable song, with its pauses and redoubled notes and returns and falls of sound, as of honey dropping from heaven—as of tears, and fire, and seed of life—which though but run over and repeated in thought pervades the spirit with "a sweet possessive pang." That apple "atop on the topmost twig" of the tree of life and song remains unreachable by any second hand, untastable by any later lip for ever; never out of sight of men's memory, never within grasp of man's desire; the apple which not Paris but Apollo gave to her whose glory has outlived her goddess, and whose name has been set above hers:—

> "La mâle Sapho, l'amante et le poete,
> Plus belle que Vénus par ses mornes pâleurs,—
> Plus belle que Vénus se dressant sur le monde!"

Among the lesser poems of this volume "The Portrait" holds a place of honour in right of its earnest beauty of thought and rich simplicity of noble images. Above them all in reach and scope of power stands the poem of "Jenny;" great among the few greatest works of the artist. Its plain truth and masculine tenderness are invested with a natural array of thought and imagination which doubles their worth and force. Without a taint on it of anything coarse or trivial, without shadow or suspicion of any facile or vulgar aim at pathetic effect of a tragical or moral kind, it cleaves to absolute fact and reality closer than any common preacher or realist could come; no side of the study is thrown out or thrown back into false light or furtive shadow; but the purity and nobility of its high and ardent pathos are qualities of a moral weight and beauty beyond reach of any rivalry. A divine pity fills it, or a pity something better than divine; the more just and deeper compassion of human fellowship and fleshly brotherhood. Here is nothing of sickly fiction or theatrical violence of tone. No spiritual station of command is assumed, no vantage-ground of outlook from hills of holiness or heights of moral indifference or barriers of hard contempt; no unction of facile tears is poured out upon this fallen golden head of a common woman; no loose-tongued effusion of slippery sympathy, to wash out shame with sentiment. And therefore is "the pity of it" a noble pity, and worth the paying; a genuine sin-offering for intercession, pleading with fate

for mercy without thought or purpose of pleading. The man whose thought is thus gloriously done into words is as other men are, only with a better brain and heart than the common, with more of mind and compassion, with better eye to see and quicker pulse to beat, with a more generous intellect and a finer taste of things; and his chance companion of a night is no ruined angel or self-immolated sacrifice, but a girl who plies her trade like any other trade, without show or sense of reluctance or repulsion; there is no hint that she was first made to fit better into a smoother groove of life, to run more easily on a higher line of being; that anything seen in prospect or retrospect rebukes or recalls her fancy into any fairer field than she may reach by her present road. All the open sources of pathetic effusion to which a common shepherd of souls would have led the flock of his readers to drink and weep and be refreshed, and leave the medicinal wellspring of sentiment warmer and fuller from their easy tears, are here dried up. This poor hireling of the streets and casinos is professionally pitiable; the world's contempt of her fellow tradeswomen is not in itself groundless or unrighteous; there is no need to raise any mirage about her as of a fallen star, a glorious wreck; but not in that bitterest cry of Othello's own agony—"a sufferance panging as soul and body's severing"—was there a more divine heat of burning compassion than the high heart of a man may naturally lavish, as in this poem, upon such an one as she is. Iago indeed could not share it, nor Roderigo; the naked understanding cannot feel this, nor the mere fool of flesh apprehend it; but only in one or the other of these can all sense be dead of "the pity of it."

Every touch of real detail and minute colour in the study serves to heighten and complete the finished picture which remains burnt in upon the eyes of our memory when the work is done. The clock ticking, the bird waking, the scratched pier-glass, the shaded lamp, give new relief as of very light and present sound to the spiritual side of the poem. How great and profound is the scope and power of the work on that side, I can offer no better proof than a reference to the whole; for no sample of this can be torn off or cut out. Of the might of handiwork and simple sovereignty of manner which make it so triumphant a witness of what English speech can do, this one excerpt may stand in evidence :—

> "Except when there may rise unsought
> Haply at times a passing thought
> Of the old days which seem to be
> Much older than any history
> That is written in any book;
> When she would lie in fields and look
> Along the ground through the blown grass,
> And wonder where the city was,
> Far out of sight, whose broil and bale
> They told her then for a child's tale.
>
> "Jenny, you know the city now.
> A child can tell the tale there, how
> Some things, which are not yet enrolled
> In market-lists, are bought and sold
> Even till the early Sunday light,
> When Saturday night is market-night
> Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
> And market-night in the Haymarket."

The simple sudden sound of that plain line is as great and rare a thing in the way of verse, as final and superb a proof of absolute poetic power upon words, as any

man's work can show. As an imaginative instance of positive and perfect nature, the whole train of thought evolved in the man's mind as he watches the head asleep on his knee is equal and incomparable; the thought of a pure honest girl, in whom the same natural loves and likings shall run straight and bear fruit to honour, that in this girl have all run to seed of shame; the possible changes of chance that in their time shall bring fresh proof of the sad equality of nature and tragic identity of birthmark as of birthright in all souls born, the remote conceivable justice and restitution that may some day strike the balance between varying lots and lives; the delicately beautiful and pitiful fancy of the rose pressed in between the pages of an impure book; and the mightier fancy so grandly cast in words, of lust, alone, aloof, immortal, immovable, outside of death in the dark of things everlasting; self-secluded in absorption of its own desire, and walled up from love or light as a toad in its stone wrapping; and last, with the grey penetration of London dawn, the awakening of mind into live day-light of work, and farewell taken of the night and its follies, not without pity or thought of them.

The whole work is worthy to fill its place for ever as one of the most perfect and memorable poems of an age or generation. It deals with deep and common things; with the present hour, and with all time; with that which is of the instant among us, and that which has a message for all souls of men; with the outward and immediate matter of the day, and with the inner and immutable ground of human nature. Its plainness of speech and subject gives it power to touch the heights and sound the

depths of tragic thought without losing the force of its hold and grasp upon the palpable truths which men often seek and cry out for in poetry, without knowing that these are only good when greatly treated, and that to artists who can treat them greatly all times and all truths are equal, and the present, though assuredly no worse, yet assuredly no better topic than the past. All the ineffably foolish jargon and jangle of criticasters about classic subjects and romantic, remote or immediate interests, duties of the poet to face and handle this thing instead of that or his own age instead of another, can only serve to darken counsel by words without knowledge: a poet of the first order raises all subjects to the first rank, and puts the life-blood of an equal interest into Hebrew forms or Greek, mediæval or modern, yesterday or yesterage. Thus there is here just the same life-blood and breath of poetic interest in this episode of a London street and lodging as in the song of "Troy Town" and the song of "Eden Bower;" just as much, and no jot more. These two songs are the masterpieces of Mr. Rossetti's magnificent lyric faculty. Full of fire and music and movement, delicate as moonlight and passionate as sunlight, fresh as dawn and fine as air, sonorous as the motion of deep waters, the infallible verse bears up the spirit safe and joyous on its wide clear way. There is a strength and breadth of style about these poems also which ennobles their sweetness and brightness, giving them a perfume that savours of no hotbed, but of hill-flowers that face the sea and the sunrise; a colour that grows in no greenhouse, but such as comes with morning upon the mountains. They are good certainly, but they are also

great; great as no other man's work of the same age and country. Out of the beautiful old tradition of Helen, which tells of her offering on a shrine at Sparta of a cup modelled upon the mould of her own breast, the poet has carved a graven image of song as tangible and lovely as the oblation itself; and this cup he has filled with the wine of love and fire of destruction, so that in the Spartan temple we feel a forecast of light and heat from the future Trojan flame. These two poems have the fiery concentration and condensation of the ballad; but they have a higher rapture of imagination, a more ardent affluence of colour and strenuous dilation of spirit, than a ballad can properly contain; their wings of words beat and burn at fuller expansion through a keener air. The song of Lilith has all the beauty and glory and force in it of the splendid creature so long worshipped of men as god or dreaded as devil; the voluptuous swiftness and strength, the supreme luxury of liberty in its measured grace and lithe melodious motion of rapid and revolving harmony; the subtle action and majestic recoil, the mysterious charm as of soundless music that hangs about a serpent as it stirs or springs. Never was nobler blood infused into the veins of an old legend than into this of the first wife of Adam, changing shapes with the snake her lover, that in his likeness she may tempt the mother of men. The passion of the cast-off temptress, in whose nets of woven hair all the souls are entangled of her rival's sons through all their generations, has such actual and instant flame of wrath and brilliance of blood and fragrance of breath in it, that we feel face to face the very vision of the old tale, and no symbol or shadow, but a bodily shape and a

fleshly charm, dominant in ear and eye. The tragic might of the myth, its fierce and keen significance, strikes through us sharpest at the end, as with the supreme sting of triumph and final fang of the transfigured serpent.

Had I time and room and skill, to whom all these are wanting, I would here at length try to say some passing word illustrative of the more obvious and the more intimate relations of this artist's work in verse and his work in painting; between the poem of "Jenny" and the design called "Found," where at early dawn the driver of a country cart finds crouching in London streets the figure of a girl once his betrothed, and stoops to lift with tender strength of love, and surprise of simple pity startled into freshness of pain, the shuddering abased head with the golden ruin of its rich soiled hair, which cowers against a graveyard wall away from the light that rises beyond the paling lamps on bridge and river; between the song of "Troy Town" and the picture of Helen, with Parian face and mouth of ardent blossom, a keen red flower-bud of fire, framed in broad gold of wide-spread locks, the sweet sharp smile of power set fast on her clear curved lips, and far behind her the dull flame of burning towers and light from reddened heaven on dark sails of lurid ships; between the early sacred poems and the early sacred designs of the author's Christian era, as for instance the "Ave" and the "Girlhood of the Virgin," with its young grace and sincere splendour of spirit, the "Staff and Scrip" and the design of "Fra Pace," the "Blessed Damozel" and the "Dream of Dante," all clothed in colours of heaven, with raiment dyed and

spun in the paradise of trust and thought; between the romantic poems and the romantic designs, as for example "Sister Helen" and the "Tune of 'Seven Towers,'" which have the same tone and type of tragic romance in their mediæval touches and notes of passionate fancy; between the poems of richer thought and the designs of riper form, works of larger insight and more strong decision, fruits of the mind at its fullest and the hand at its mightiest, as the "Burden of Nineveh" and the "Sybil" or "Pandora." The passage from a heaven of mere angels and virgins to the stronger vision of Venus Verticordia, of Helen ἑλέπτολις, of Lilith and Cassandra, is a type of the growth of mind and hand to the perfect power of mastery over the truth and depth of nature, the large laws of spirit and body, the mysteries and the majesties of very life; whither the soul that has attained perceives, though it need reject no first faith and forsake no first love, though rather it include in a larger comprehension of embrace those old with these new graces, those creeds with this belief, that any garden of paradise on earth or above earth is but a little part of a great world, as every fancy of man's faith is a segment of the truth of his nature, a splintered fragment of universal life and spirit of thought everlasting; since what can he conceive or believe but it must have this of truth in it, that it is a veritable product of his own brain and outcome for the time of his actual being, with a place and a reason of its own for root and support to it through its due periods of life and change and death? But to trace the passage from light into light and strength into strength, the march from work on to work and triumph on to triumph, of a genius so full

of life and growth and harmonious exuberance of expansion, so loyal to rule of instinct and that natural order of art and thought whose service is perfect freedom ; to lay out a chart of its progress and mark down the lines of its advance ; this, high as the office would be and worthy the ambition, is not a possible task for criticism ; though what manner of rank a man may hold and what manner of work he may have to do in that rank, it is the business of criticism to see and say.

In every age there is some question raised as to its wants and powers, its strength and weakness, its great or small worth and work ; and in every age that question is waste of time and speech—of thought usually there is no waste, for the questioners have none to expend. There has never been an age that was not degenerate in the eyes of its own fools ; the yelp of curtailed foxes in every generation is the same. To a small soul the age which has borne it can appear only as an age of small souls ; the pigmy brain and emasculate spirit can perceive in its own time nothing but dwarfishness and emasculation. That the world has ever seen spirits of another sort, the poor heart of such creatures would fain deny and dares not ; but to allow that the world does now is insufferable ; at least they can "swagger themselves out of their own eyes" into the fond belief that they are but samples of their puny time, overtopped in spiritual stature by the spirits of times past alone. But not by blustering denial or blustering assertion of an age's greatness will the question be decided whether the age be great or not. Each century has seemed to some of its children an epoch of decadence and decline in national life and spiritual, in moral or

material glory ; each alike has heard the cry of degeneracy raised against it, the wail of emulous impotence set up against the weakness of the age ; Dante's generation and Shakespeare's, Milton's and Shelley's, have all been ages of poetic decay in their turn, as the age of Hugo is now ; there as here no great man was to be seen, no great work was to be done, no great cry was to be heard, no great impulse was to be felt, by those who could feel nothing, hear nothing, do nothing, and see nothing. To them the poor present has always been pitiable or damnable, the past which bore it divine. And other men than these have swelled the common cry of curs : Byron, himself in his better moments a witness against his own words, helped the fools of his hour to decry their betters and his own, by a pretence of wailing over the Augustan age of Anne, when "it was all Horace with us ; it is all Claudian now." His *now* has become our *then*, and the same whine is raised in its honour ; for the cant of irritation and insincerity, hungry vanity and starving spite, can always be caught up and inherited by those who can inherit nothing of a strong man's but his weakness, of a wise man's but his folly ; who can gather at a great man's board no sustenance from the meats and wines, but are proud to pilfer the soiled napkins and cracked platters from under his side-table. Whether there be any great work doing in our time, or any great man living, it is not worth while to debate ; but if there be not, it is certain that no man living can know it ; for to pass judgment worth heeding on any age and give sentence that shall last on any generation, a man must himself be great ; and if no man on earth be great in our day, who on earth can

be great enough to know and let us know it on better authority than a pigmy's? Such champions as please may fight out on either side their battle of the sandbags and windbags between this hour and the next; I am content to assume, and am not careful to dispute in defence of the assumption, that the qualities which make men great and the work of men famous are now what they were, and will be what they are: that there is no progress and no degeneracy traceable from Æschylus to Shakespeare, from Athenian sculptors to Venetian painters; that the gifts of genius are diverse, but the quality is one; and—though this be a paradox—that this quality does not wait till a man be dead to descend on him and belong to him; that his special working power does not of necessity begin with the cessation of it, and that the dawn of his faculty cannot reasonably be dated from the hour of its extinction. If this paradox be not utterly untenable, it follows that dead men of genius had genius even when yet alive, and did not begin to be great men by ceasing to be men at all; and that so far we have no cause to distrust the evidence of reason which proves us the greatness of men past when it proves to us by the same process of testimony the greatness of men present.

Here for example in the work of Mr. Rossetti, besides that particular colour and flavour which distinguishes each master's work from that of all other masters, and by want of which you may tell merely good work from wholly great work, the general qualities of all great poetry are separately visible and divisible; strength, sweetness, affluence, simplicity, depth, light, harmony, variety, bodily grace and range of mind and force of soul

and ease of flight, the scope and sweep of wing to impel the might and weight of thought through the air and light of speech with a motion as of mere musical impulse; and not less the live bloom of perfect words, warm as breath and fine as flower-dust, which lies light as air upon the parting of lyric leaves that open into song; the rare and ineffable mark of a supreme singing power, an element too subtle for solution in any crucible of analysis, though its presence or absence be patent at a first trial to all who have a sense of taste. All these this poet has, and the mastery over all these which melts and fuses all into form and use; the cunning to turn his own gifts to service which is the last great apanage of great workmen. Colour and sound are servants of his thought, and his thought is servant of his will; in him the will and the instinct are not two forces, but one strength; are not two leaders, but one guide; there is no shortcoming, no pain or compulsion in the homage of hand to soul. The subject-matter of his work is always great and fit; nothing trivial, nothing illicit, nothing unworthy the workmanship of a master-hand, is to be swept up from any corner of the floor; there is no misuse or waste of good work on stuff too light or hard to take the impression of his noble style. He builds up no statues of snow at the bidding of any fool, with the hand that can carve itself a godlike model in ivory or gold; not though all the fools of the place and hour should recommend snow as the best material, for its softness and purity. Time and work and art are too precious to him and too serious to be spent on anything less than the best. An artist worthy of the highest work will make his least work worthy of himself. In

each line of labour which his spirit may strike into he will make his mark, and set his stamp on any metal he may take in hand to forge; for he can strike into no wrong line, and take in hand no base metal. So equal a balance of two great gifts as we find in the genius of this artist is perhaps the greatest gift of all, as it is certainly the most singular. We cannot tell what jewels were lost to the treasure-house of time in that century of sonnets which held "the bosom-beats of Raffael;" we can but guess that they had somewhat, and doubt how nearly they had all, of his perfect grace and godhead of heavenly humanity. Even of the giant-god his rival we cannot be sure that his divine faculties never clashed or crossed each other to their mutual hindrance.

But here, where both the sister powers serve in the temple of one mind and impel the work of one hand, their manner of service is smooth, harmonious, perfect; the splendid quality of painting and the subtle faculty of verse gain glory from each other without taking, reign side by side with no division of empire, yet with no confusion of claims, with no invasion of rights. No tongueless painter or handless poet could be safer from the perils of mixed art; his poems are not over pictorial or his pictures over poetical; his poetry has not the less depth and reach and force and height of spirit proper to poetry, his painting has not the less might and skill, the less excellence of form and colour or masterdom of design and handiwork proper to painting, for the double glory of his genius. Which of the two great men in him, the painter or the poet, be the greater, only another artist equal to him on either hand and taintless of jealousy or misconceit

could say with authority worth a hearing; and such a judge he is not likely to find. But what is his relative rank among other men it needs no such rare union of faculties to perceive. His place among the painters of his century may be elsewhere debated and determined; but here and now the materials lie before us for decision as to his place among its poets. Of these there is but one alive whose name is already unamenable to any judgment of the hour's; whose supremacy, whether it be or be not a matter of question between insular and provincial circles of parasites or sectarians, is no more debateable before any graver tribunal than the motion of the earth round the sun. Upon him, as upon two or three other of the leaders of men in time past, the verdict of time has been given before his death. In our comparison of men with men for worse or better we do not now take into reckoning the name of Victor Hugo. The small gatherings or swollen assemblies of important ephemerals who met to dispute the respective claims and merits of Shakespeare and Jonson, Milton and Waller, Shelley and Byron, have on the whole fallen duly dumb: the one supreme figure of each time is as generally and openly acknowledged by all capable articulate creatures as need be desired. To sit in the seat of such disputants can be no present man's ambition. It ought to be, if it be not, superfluous to set down in words the assurance that we claim for no living poet a place beside the Master; that we know there is no lyrist alive but one who could have sung for us the cradle-song of death, the love-song of madness, the sea-song of exile, the hunting-song of revolution; that since the songs of Gretchen in "Faust"

and Beatrice in the "Cenci," there have been no such songs heard among men as the least of these first four among all his lyrics that rise to recollection at the moment. Fantine's song or Gastibelza's, the "Adieu, patrie!" or the "Chasseur Noir," any one of these by itself would suffice to establish, beyond debate and beyond acclamation, the absolute sovereignty of the great poet whose glory could dispense even with any of these.

The claims to precedence of other men who stand in the vanguard of their time are open matters for the discussion of judgments to adjust or readjust. Among English-speaking poets of his age I know of none who can reasonably be said to have given higher proof of the highest qualities than Mr. Rossetti; if the qualities we rate highest in poetry be imagination, passion, thought, harmony and variety of singing power. Each man who has anything has his own circle of work and realm of rule, his own field to till and to reign in; no rival can overmatch for firm completion of lyric line, for pathos made perfect and careful melody of high or of intimate emotion, "New-Year's Eve" or "The Grandmother," "Œnone" or "Boadicea," the majestic hymn or the rich lament for love won and lost in "Maud;" none can emulate the fiery subtlety and sinuous ardour of spirit which penetrates and lights up all secret gulfs and glimmering heights of human evil and good in "The Ring and the Book," making the work done live because "the soul of man is precious to man:" none can "blow in power" again through the notched reed of Pan by the river, to detain the sun on the hills with music; none can outrun that smooth speed of gracious strength which touched its

Grecian goal in "Thyrsis" and the "Harp-player;" none can light as with fires or lull as with flutes of magic the reaches of so full a stream of story as flows round the "Earthly Paradise" with ships of heroes afloat on it. But for height and range and depth, for diversity and perfection of powers, Mr. Rossetti is abreast of elder poets not less surely than of younger. Again I take to witness four singled poems; "The Burden of Nineveh," "Sister Helen," "Jenny," and "Eden Bower." Though there were not others as great as these to cite at need, we might be content to pass judgment on the strength of these only; but others as great there are. If he have not the full effluence of romance or the keen passion of human science that give power on this hand to Morris and on that to Browning, his work has form and voice, shapeliness and sweetness, unknown to the great analyst; it has weight and heat, gravity and intensity, wanting to the less serious and ardent work of the latest master of romance. Neither by any defect of form nor by any default of force does he ever fall short of either mark or fight with either hand "as one that beateth the air." In sureness of choice and scope of interest, in solidity of subject and sublimity of object, the general worth of his work excels the rate of other men's; he wastes no breath and mistakes no distance, sets his genius to no tasks unfit for it, and spends his strength in the culture of no fruitless fields. What he would do is always what a poet should, and what he would do is always done. Born a light-bearer and leader of men, he has always fulfilled his office with readiness and done his work with might. Help and strength and delight and fresh life have long been gifts of his

giving, and freely given as only great gifts can be. And now that at length we receive from hands yet young and strong this treasure of many years, the gathered flower of youth and ripe firstlings of manhood, a fruit of the topmost branch "more golden than gold," all men may witness and assure themselves what manner of harvest the life of this man was to bear; all may see that although, in the perfect phrase of his own sonnet, the last birth of life be death, as her three first-born were love and art and song, yet two of these which she has borne to him, art namely and song, cannot now be made subject to that last; that life and love with it may pass away, but very surely no death that ever may be born shall have power upon these for ever.

1870

MORRIS'S LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON.

THE hardest work and the highest that can be done by a critic studious of the right is first to discern what is good, and then to discover how and in what way it is so. To do this office for any man during his life is a task always essentially difficult, sometimes seemingly ungracious. We demand of the student who stands up as a judge to show us as he best may how and why this man excels that, what are the stronger and what the weaker sides of his attempted or achieved work when set fairly by the work of others. For if in some one point at least it does not exceed theirs, it is not work of a high kind, and worthy of enduring study. Who is to say this, who is to prove it, we have first to find out ; and found out it must be, if criticism is to be held of more account than the ephemeral cackle of casual praisers and blamers ; if it is to be thoughtful and truthful, worthy the name of an art, handmaid of higher arts. Now, as a rule, men are mistrustful of one who takes leave to judge the work of a fellow-workman. And not without reason or show of reason ; for no verdicts more foolish or more false have been delivered than some of those passed by poet upon poet, by painter upon painter. Nor need this be taken as proof of anything base or partial or jealous in the

speaker's mind. It is not easy to see at once widely and well. For example, could Byron and Wordsworth have judged better of each other's work, each might have lost something of fitness for his own. It is a hard law, but a law it is. Against this, however, a counter truth not less grave than this must be weighed. We do not appeal to men ignorant of politics for a verdict on affairs of state, to men unskilled in science on a scientific question. And no matter of science or of state is more abstruse and hard to settle than a question of art; nor is any more needful to have settled for us in good time, if only lest accident or neglect, ignorance or violence, rob us unaware of some precious and irrecoverable thing, not known of or esteemed while safely with us. Consider what all men have lost already and for ever, merely by such base means as these; how much of classic work and mediæval, how much of Greece, of Italy, of England, has gone from us that we might have kept. For this and other reasons it may be permissible, or pardonable at least, for a student of art to speak now and then on art; so long only as he shall speak honestly and carefully, without overmuch of assumption or deprecation.

Over the first fortunes of a newly-born work of art accident must usually preside for evil or for good. Over the earliest work of the artist whom we are here to take note of, that purblind leader of the blind presided on the whole for evil. Here and there it met with eager recognition and earnest applause; nowhere, if I err not, with just praise or blame worth heeding. It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or

tradition rather than a poet or student. Those who so judged were blind guides of the purblind; reversing thus the undivine office of their god Accident. Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. It needed no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant or as beggar or as thief. Not as yet a master, he was assuredly no longer a pupil.

A little later than this one appeared another volume of poems, not dissimilar in general choice of stories and subjects, perfect where this was imperfect, strong where this was weak; but strong and perfect on that side alone. All that was wanting here was there supplied, but all that was here supplied was wanting there. In form, in structure, in composition, few poems can be more faultless than those of Mr. Tennyson, few faultier than those of Mr. Morris, which deal with the legend of Arthur and Guenevere. I do not speak here of form in the abstract and absolute sense; for where this is wanting, all is wanting; without this there can be no work of art at all. I speak of that secondary excellence always necessary to the perfection, but not always indispensable to the existence of art. These first poems of Mr. Morris were not malformed; a misshapen poem is no poem; as well might one talk of unnatural nature or superhuman manhood; but they are not well clad; their attire now and then has been huddled on; they have need sometimes of combing and trimming. Take that one for example

called "King Arthur's Tomb." It has not been constructed at all; the parts hardly hold together; it has need of joists and screws, props and rafters. Many able writers of verse whom no miracle could endow with competence to do such work would have missed the faults as surely as the merits; would have done something where the poet has cared to do nothing. There is scarcely connection here, and scarcely composition. There is hardly a trace of narrative power or mechanical arrangement. There is a perceptible want of tact and practice, which leaves the poem in parts indecorous and chaotic. But where among other and older poets of his time and country is one comparable for perception and expression of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things? where a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure? The figures here given have the blood and breath, the shape and step of life; they can move and suffer; their repentance is as real as their desire; their shame lies as deep as their love. They are at once remorseful for the sin and regretful of the pleasure that is past. The retrospective vision of Launcelot and of Guenevere is as passionate and profound as life. Riding towards her without hope, in the darkness and the heat of the way, he can but divert and sustain his spirit by recollection of her loveliness and her love, seen long since asleep and waking, in another place than this, on a distant night.

> "Pale in the green sky were the stars, I ween,
> Because the moon shone like a tear she shed
> When she dwelt up in heaven a while ago
> And ruled all things but God."

Retrospect and vision, natural memories and spiritual, here coalesce; and how exquisite is the retrospect, and how passionate the vision, of past light and colour in the sky, past emotion and conception in the soul! Not in the idyllic school is a chord ever struck, a note ever sounded, so tender and subtle as this. Again, when Guenevere has maddened herself and him with wild words of reproach and remorse, abhorrence and attraction, her sharp and sudden memory of old sights and sounds and splendid irrevocable days finds word and form not less noble and faithful to fact and life. The first words of Arthur bidding her cherish the knight "whom all the land called his banner, sword, and shield;" the long first pressure of Launcelot's lips on her hand; the passionate and piteous course of love here ended (if ended at all) above the king's grave dug in part and unwittingly by their wrong-doing; the solitary sound of birds singing in her gardens, while in the lists the noise went on of spears and shouts telling which knight of them all rode here or there; the crying of ladies' names as men and horses clashed one against another, names that bit like the steel they impelled to its mark; the agony of anger and horror which gives edge and venom to her memory—

> "Banner of Arthur—with black-bended shield
> "Sinister-wise across the fair gold ground!
> Here let me tell you what a knight you are,
> O sword and shield of Arthur! you are found
> A crooked sword, I think, that leaves a scar
> "On the bearer's arm so be he thinks it straight—
> Twisted Malay's crease, beautiful blue-grey,
> Poisoned with sweet fruit—as he found too late,
> My husband Arthur, on some bitter day!

"O sickle cutting harvest all day long,
That the husbandman across his shoulder hangs,
And going homeward about evensong,
Dies the next morning, struck through by the fangs!"[1]

—all these points and phases of passion are alike truly and nobly rendered. I have not read the poem for years, I have not the book at hand, and I cite from memory; but I think it would be safe to swear to the accuracy of my citation. Such verses are not forgetable. They are not, indeed,—as are the "Idylls of the King"—the work of a dexterous craftsman in full practice. Little beyond dexterity, a rare eloquence, and a laborious patience of hand, has been given to the one or denied to the other.[2] These are good gifts and great; but it is better to want clothes than limbs.

The shortcomings of this first book are nowhere traceable in the second now lying before us. A nine

[1] Perhaps in all this noble passage of poetry there is nothing nobler than this bitter impulse of irony, this fiery shame and rage of repentance, which here impels Guenevere to humiliate herself through her lover, and thus consummate the agony of abasement. "False and fatal as banner, or shield, or sword, wherein is he better than a peasant's dangerous and vulgar implement, as fatal to him it may be, by carelessness or chance, as a king's weapon to the king if handled amiss?" And yet for all this she cannot but cleave to him; through her lover she scourges herself; it is suicide in her to slay him; but even so his soul must needs be saved—"so as by fire." No poet about to start on his course ever saw for himself or showed to others a thing more tragic and more true than this study of noble female passion, half selfless and half personal, half mad and half sane.

[2] The comparison here made is rather between book and book than between man and man. Both poets have done better elsewhere, each after his kind; and except by his best work no workman can be fairly judged. A critic who should underrate either would be condemnable on both hands.

years' space does not lie between them in vain; enough has been learned and unlearned, rejected and attained. Here indeed there is not the stormy variety, the lyric ardour of the first book; there is not the passion of the ballads, the change of note and diversity of power, all that fills with life and invigorates with colour the artist's earlier designs; for not all of this is here needed. Of passion and humour, of impulse and instinct, he had given noble and sufficient proof in manifold ways. But this "Jason" is a large and coherent poem, completed as conceived; the style throughout on a level with the invention. In direct narrative power, in clear forthright manner of procedure, not seemingly troubled to select, to pick and sift and winnow, yet never superfluous or verbose, never straggling or jarring; in these high qualities it resembles the work of Chaucer. Even against the great master his pupil may fairly be matched for simple sense of right, for grace and speed of step, for purity and justice of colour. In all the noble roll of our poets there has been since Chaucer no second teller of tales, no second rhapsode comparable to the first, till the advent of this one. As with the Greeks, so with us; we have had in lieu of these a lyric and a tragic school; we have also had the subordinate schools, gnomic and idyllic, domestic and didactic. But the old story-singers, the old "Saga-men," we have no more heard of. As soon might we have looked for a fresh Odyssey from southward, a fresh Njala from northward. And yet no higher school has brought forth rarer poets than this. "But," it is said, "this sort of poetry is a March flower, a child of the first winds and suns of a nation; in May

even, much more in August, you cannot have it except by forcing; and forcing it will not bear. A late romance is a hothouse daffodil." And so indeed it must usually be. But so it is not here; and the proof is the poem. It could not be done, no doubt, only it has been. Here is a poem sown of itself, sprung from no alien seed, cast after no alien model; fresh as wind, bright as light, full of the spring and the sun. It shares of course the conditions of its kind; it has no time for the subtleties and hardly room for the ardours of tragic poetry. Passion in romance is of its nature subordinate to action; the flowing stream of story hushes and lulls the noise of its gurgling and refluent eddies with a still predominance of sound. To me it seems that there has here been almost too much of this. Only by rare and brief jets does the poet let out the fire of a potent passion which not many others can kindle and direct. For the most part, the river of romance flows on at full, but keeping well to its channel, unvexed by rains and undisturbed by whirlpools. In a word, through great part of this poem there is no higher excellence attempted than that of adventurous or romantic narrative couched in the simplest and fittest forms of poetry. This abstinence is certainly not due to impotence, possibly not to intention, more probably to distaste. Mr. Morris has an English respect for temperance and reserve; good things as drags, but not as clogs. He is not afraid to tackle a passion, but he will not move an inch from his way to tackle it. Tragedy can never be more than the episode of a romance, and romance is rather to his taste than naked tragedy. He reminds us of the knight in Chaucer cutting sharply short

the monk's tragic histories as too piteous for recital, or the very monk himself breaking off the detail of Ugolino's agony with a reference to Dante for those who can endure it.

The descriptive and decorative beauties of this romance of "Jason" are excellent above all in this, that numberless though they be they are always just and fit. Not a tone of colour, not a note of form, is misplaced or dispensable. The pictures are clear and chaste, sweet and lucid, as early Italian work. There are crowds and processions, battle-pieces and merry-makings, worthy of Benozzo or Carpaccio; single figures or groups of lovers in flowery watery land, worthy of Sandro or Filippo. The sea-pieces are like the younger Lippi's; the best possible to paint from shore. They do not taste salt or sound wide; but they have all the beauty of the beach. The romance poets have never loved the sea as have the tragic poets; Chaucer simply ignores it with a shiver; even Homer's men are glad to be well clear of it. Ulysses has no sea-king's impulse; he fights and beats it, and is glad, and there an end; necessity alone ever drives him off shore. But Æschylus loves the Oceanides; and Shakespeare, landsman though he were, rejoices in the roll and clash of breakers.

For examples of the excellences we have noted—the chastity of colour and noble justice of composition, the fruitful and faithful touches of landscape incident—almost any page of the poem might be turned up. Compare the Hesperian with the Circean garden, the nameless northern desert lands with the wood of Medea's transformation, or the seaward bent where Jason "died strangely." No

flower of the landscape is slurred, but no flower is obtrusive; the painting is broad and minute at once, large and sure by dint of accuracy. And there are wonderful touches on it of fairy mystery; weird lights pass over it and wafts of mystical wind; as here:—

> "There comes a murmur from the shore,
> And in the place two fair streams are,
> Drawn from the purple hills afar,
> Drawn down unto the restless sea,
> *The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,*
> *The shore no ship has ever seen,*
> Still beaten by the billows green,
> Whose murmur comes unceasingly
> Unto the place for which I cry."

All this song of a nymph to Hylas is full of the melody which involves colour and odour, but the two lines marked have in them the marvel and the music of a dream. Nor is any passage in the poem pitched in a higher and clearer key than the first hymn of Orpheus as Argo takes the sea. As noble is the song of triumph at p. 217, which should be set by the side of this, to which it is in some sort antiphonal.

But the root of the romance lies of course in the character of Medea; and here, where it was needfullest to do well, the poet has done best. At her first entrance the poem takes new life and rises out of the atmosphere of mere adventure and incident. The subdued and delicate ardour of the scene in Jason's chamber, following as it does on the ghastly beauty of that in the wood of the Three-formed, is proof enough and at once with how strong and soft a touch the picture will be completed. Her incantations, and her flight with Jason, have no less

of fanciful and tender power. The fifteenth book, where she beguiles Pelias to death at the hands of his daughters, is a sample of flawless verse and noble imagination unsurpassed by any here. For dramatic invention and vivid realism of the impossible, which turns to fair and sensible truth the wildest dreams of legend, there has been no poet for centuries comparable. But the very flower and crest of this noble poem is the final tragedy at Corinth. Queen, sorceress, saviour, she has sunk or risen to mere woman; and not in vain before entering the tragic lists has the poet called on that great poet's memory who has dealt with the terrible and pitiful passion of women like few but Shakespeare since.

Worthy, indeed, even of the master-hand is all that follows. Let the student weigh well the slight but great touches in which the fitful fury and pity and regret of the sufferer are given; so delicate and accurate that only by the entire and majestic harmony of tragedy will he discern the excellence and justice of every component note. To come upon this part of the poem is as the change from river to sea (Book XII.), when wind and water had a larger savour in lip and nostril of the Argonauts. Note well the new and piteous beauty of this :—

"Kindly I deal with thee, mine enemy;
Since swift forgetfulness to thee I send.
But thou shalt die—his eyes shall see thine end—
Ah! if thy death alone could end it all!

"*But ye—shall I behold you when leaves fall,*
In some sad evening of the autumn-tide?
Or shall I have you sitting by my side
Amidst the feast, so that folk stare and say,
'Sure the grey wolf has seen the queen to-day'?

What! when I kneel in temples of the Gods
Must I bethink me of the upturned sods,
And hear a voice say: 'Mother, wilt thou come
And see us resting in our new-made home,
Since thou wert used to make us lie full soft,
Smoothing our pillows many a time and oft?
O mother, now no dainty food we need,
Whereof of old thou usedst to have such heed.
O mother, now we need no gown of gold,
Nor in the winter time do we grow cold;
Thy hands would bathe us when we were thine own,
Now doth the rain wash every shining bone.
No pedagogue we need, for surely heaven
Lies spread above us, with the planets seven,
To teach us all its lore.'"

Rarely but in the ballad and romance periods has such poetry been written, so broad and sad and simple, so full of deep and direct fire, certain of its aim, without finish, without fault. The passion from hence fills and burns to a close; the verse for a little is as the garment of Medea steeped in strange moisture as of tears and liquid flame to be kindled by the sun.

"O sons, with what sweet counsels and what tears
Would I have hearkened to the hopes and fears
Of your first loves: what rapture had it been
Your dear returning footsteps to have seen
Amidst the happy warriors of the land;
But now—but now—this is a little hand,
Too often kissed since love did first begin
To win such curses as it yet shall win,
When after all bad deeds there comes a worse;
Praise to the Gods! ye know not how to curse."

It should now be clear, or never, that in this poem a new thing of great price has been cast into the English treasure-house. Nor is the cutting or the setting of the

jewel unworthy of it; art and instinct have wrought hand in hand to its perfection. Other and various fields await the workman who has here approved himself a master, acceptable into the guild of great poets on a footing of his own to be shared or disputed by no other. Strained clear and guided straight as now, his lofty lyrical power must keep all its promise to us. Diffusion is in the nature of a romance, and it cannot be said that here the stream has ever overflowed into marshland or stagnated in lock or pool. Therefore we do not blame the length and fullness of so fair a river; but something of barrier or dam may serve to concentrate and condense the next. Also, if we must note the slightest ripples of the water-flies that wrinkle it, let us set down in passing that there are certain slight laxities or perversities of metre which fret the ear and perplex the eye, noticeable only as the least shortcoming is noticeable in great work. Elision, for example, is a necessity, not a luxury, of metre. This law Chaucer, a most loyal versifier, never allows himself to slight after the fashion of his follower. But into these straits of technical art we need not now steer. So much remains unremarked, so much unsaid; so much of beauty slighted, of uncommended excellence; that I close these inadequate and hurried notes with a sense of grave injustice done. To the third book of Mr. Morris we look now, not for the seal of our present judgment, but for the accomplishment of our highest hopes; for a fresh honour done to English art, a fresh delight to us, and a fresh memory for the future.

1867.

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S NEW POEMS.

(1867.)

THERE are two things which most men begin by hating until they have won their way, and which when combined are more than doubly hateful to all in whose eyes they are not doubly admirable: perfection of work, and personality in the workman. As to perfection, it must be seen to be loved, and few have eyes to see it. To none but these few can it be acceptable at first; and only because these few are the final legislators of opinion, the tacit and patient lawgivers of time, does it ever win acceptance. A strong personal tone of character stamped and ingrained into a man's work, if more offensive at first to the mass, is likelier to find favour before long in the sight of some small body or sect of students. If not repulsive, it must be attractive and impressive; and there are always mental cripples in plenty to catch at a strong man's staff and cut it down into a crutch for themselves. But the more love a man has for perfection, the more faith in form, the more instinct for art, the fewer will these early believers be, and the better worth having; the process of winning their suffrages will be slower, and surer the hold of them when won.

For some years the immediate fame of Mr. Matthew Arnold has been almost exclusively the fame of a prose

writer. Those students could hardly find hearing—they have nowhere of late found expression that I know of—who, with all esteem and enjoyment of his essays, of their clearness, candour, beauty of sentiment and style, retained the opinion that if justly judged he must be judged by his verse and not by his prose; certainly not by this alone; that future students would cleave to that with more of care and of love; that the most memorable quality about him was the quality of a poet. Not that they liked the prose less, but that they liked the verse more. His best essays ought to live longer than most, his best poems cannot but live as long as any, of their time. So it seemed to some who were accordingly more eager to receive and more careful to study a new book of his poems than most books they could have looked for; and since criticism of the rapid and limited kind possible to contemporaries can be no more than the sincere exposition of the writer's belief and of his reasons for it, I, as one of these, desire, with all deference but with all decision, to say what I think of this book, and why. For the honour of criticism, if it is to win or to retain honour at all, it must be well for the critic to explain clearly his personal point of view, instead of fighting behind the broad and crestless shield of a nameless friend or foe. The obscurest name and blazon are at least recognisable; but a mere voice is mere wind, though it affect to speak with the tongues and the authority of men and of angels.

First on this new stage is the figure of an old friend and teacher. Mr. Arnold says that the poem of "Empedocles on Etna" was withdrawn before fifty copies of the first edition were sold. I must suppose then that one

of these was the copy I had when a schoolboy — how snatched betimes from the wreck and washed across my way I know not; but I remember well enough how then as now the songs of Callicles clove to my ear and memory. Early as this was, it was not my first knowledge of the poet; the "Reveller," the "Merman," the "New Sirens," I had mainly by heart in a time of childhood just ignorant of teens. I do not say I understood the latter poem in a literal or logical fashion, but I had enjoyment enough of its music and colour and bright sadness as of a rainy sunset or sundawn. A child with any ear or eye for the attraction of verse or art can dispense with analysis and rest content to apprehend it without comprehension; it were to be wished that adults equally incapable would rest equally content. Here I must ask, as between brackets, if this beautiful poem is never to be reissued after the example of its younger?[1] No poet could afford to drop or destroy it; I might at need call into court older and better judges to back my judgment in this; meantime "I hope here be proofs" that, however inadequate may be my estimate of the poet on whom I am now to discourse, it is not inadequate through want of intimacy with his work. At the risk of egotism, I record it in sign of gratitude; I cannot count the hours of pure and high pleasure, I cannot reckon the help and guidance in thought and work, which I owe to him as to all other real and noble artists whose influence it was my fortune to feel when most susceptible of influence, and least conscious of it, and most in want. In one of his books, where he presses rather hard upon

[1] A question which I still regret should be yet unanswered in its favour (1875).

our school as upon one wholly void of spiritual or imaginative culture, he speaks of his poems as known to no large circle—implies this at least, if I remember: he will not care to be assured that to some boys at Eton Sohrab and Rustum, Tristram and Iseult, have been close and common friends, their stream of Oxus and bays of Brittany familiar almost as the well-loved Thames weirs and reaches. However, of this poem of "Empedocles" the world it seems was untimely robbed, though I remember on searching to have found a notice of it here and there. Certain fragments were then given back by way of dole, chiefly in the second series of the author's revised poems. But one, the largest if not the brightest jewel, was withheld; the one long and lofty chant of Empedocles. The reasons assigned by Mr. Arnold in a former preface for cancelling the complete poem had some weight: the subject-matter is oppressive, the scheme naked and monotonous; the blank verse is not sonorous, not vital and various enough; in spite of some noble interludes, it fails on the whole to do the work and carry the weight wanted; its simplicity is stony and grey, with dry flats and rough whinstones. To the lyrics which serve as water-springs and pastures I shall have to pay tribute of thanks in their turn; but first I would say something of that strain of choral philosophy which falls here "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." It is a model of grave, clear, solemn verse; the style plain and bare, but sufficient and strong; the thought deep, lucid, direct. We may say of it what the author has himself said of the wise and sublime verses of Epictetus, that "the fortitude of that is for the strong, for the few; even for them, the spiritual atmo-

sphere with which it surrounds them is bleak and grey;" but the air is higher and purer, the ground firmer, the view clearer; we have a surer foothold on these cold hills of thought than in the moist fragrance of warmer air which steeps the meadows and marshes of sentiment and tradition.

> "Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow,
> And faint the city gleams;
> Rare the lone pastoral huts; marvel not thou!
> The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
> But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams;
> Alone the sun arises, and alone
> Spring the great streams."

These noble verses of another poem clipped from Mr. Arnold's first book, and left hanging in fragments about one's memory—I here make my protest against its excision [1]—may serve as types of the later, the more immediate and elaborate discourse of thought here embodied and attired in words of stately and simple harmony. It is no small or common comfort, after all the delicate and ingenious shuffling of other English poets about the edge of deep things, to come upon one who speaks with so large and clear and calm an utterance; who begins at the taproot and wellspring of the matter, leaving others to wade ankle-deep in still waters and weave river-flags or lake-lilies in lieu of stemming the stream. Nothing in verse or out of verse is more wearisome than the delivery of reluctant doubt, of half-hearted hope and half-

[1] It has since been replaced, with the final stanza wholly rewritten. For its recovery I believe that I may take some credit to myself, and claim in consequence some thanks from all serious students of contemporary poetry.

incredulous faith. A man who suffers from the strong desire either to believe or disbelieve something he cannot may be worthy of sympathy, is certainly worthy of pity, until he begins to speak; and if he tries to speak in verse, he misuses the implement of an artist. We have had evidences of religion, aspirations and suspirations of all kinds, melodious regrets and tortuous returns in favour or disfavour of this creed or that—all by way of poetic work; and all within the compass and shot-range of a single faith; all, at the widest, bounded north, south, east, and west by material rivers or hills, by an age or two since, by a tradition or two; all leaving the spirit cramped and thirsty. We have had Christian sceptics, handcuffed fighters, tongue-tied orators, plume-plucked eagles; believers whose belief was a sentiment, and free-thinkers who saw nothing before Christ or beyond Judæa. To get at the bare rock is a relief after acres of such quaking ground.

A French critic has expressed this in words which I may quote here, torn out from their context:—"Le côté fort du caractère d'un peuple fait souvent le côté faible de sa poésie. Ces poëtes anglais pèchent du côté de la raison religieuse. Ce n'est pas que les anglais soient effectivement ou trop religieux ou trop raisonnables. C'est qu'ils ont la manie de vouloir réconcilier les choses irréconciliables. On voit cela partout, dans la politique, dans les beaux arts, dans la vie pratique, dans la vie idéale. Leur république est juchée sur des échasses féodales, attifée des guenilles étincelantes d'une royauté usée jusqu'à la corde; tout le bric-à-brac monarchique lui plaît; ses parfums rances, ses lambris dédorés, sa

défroque rapiécée ; elle n'ose se montrer sans mettre son masque de reine, sans rajuster ses jupons de pairesse. Pourquoi se donne-t-elle cette peine ? quel profit espère-t-elle en retirer ? c'est ce qu'un anglais même ne saurait dire ;[1] tout en répondant que Dieu le sait, il est permis de douter que Dieu le sache. Venons aux arts ; que veut-on d'un peintre ? de la peinture ? fi donc ! Il nous faut un peu de morale, un peu d'intention, le beau vrai, le vrai beau, l'idée actuelle, l'actualité idéale, mille autres choses très-recommandables dans ce genre-là. C'est ce malin esprit, très-peu spirituel, qui est venu souffler aux poëtes la belle idée de se poser en apôtres réconciliateurs entre le croyant et le libre penseur. L'un d'eux fait foudroyer M. Renan par Saint Jean expirant en pleine odeur de philosophie, écrase sous son talon le pauvre évêque Colenso, et démontre que si le Christ n'est pas 'le Dieu incommensurable,' il doit être tout bonnement un homme 'perdu' (c'est son mot) ; vu que d'après la tradition de sa parole écrite plusieurs millions de gens plus ou moins honnêtes sont morts dans cette foi, et que voilà apparemment le seul Dieu, et que voilà la seule religion, qui ait jamais produit un effet pareil. Sous des vers plus

[1] This is a strange and sad instance of the ignorance and perversity as foreign to Englishmen as they are natural to foreigners. Any one could have answered him, and at any length. Envy doubtless as well as error must have inspired this blasphemy against the Constitution once delivered to the saints—that august result of a plenary inspiration above the reach of human wisdom, sent down direct from heaven, and vouchsafed alone to this chosen nation, this peculiar people ; to which, as to Tyre or Jerusalem in time past, the Supreme Powers have said by the sweet voices of their representative elect—elect of gods and men—"Thou sealest up the sum ; full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty."

soigneusement limés, plus coquettement ajustés, nous ne trouverons qu'une plus profonde stérilité de raisonnement. Voici une belle âme de poëte qui pleure, qui cherche, qui envisage la mort, le néant, l'infini ; qui veut peser les faits, trier les croyances, vanner la foi ; et voici son dernier mot : Croyons, afin de moins souffrir ; tâchons au moins de nous faire accroire à nous-mêmes que nous croyons à quelque chose de consolant. Il est douloureux de ne pas croire qu'on doit revivre un jour, revoir ses amis morts, accomplir de nouveaux destins. Posons donc que cela est, que cela doit être, qu'il faut absolument y croire, ou du moins faire semblant à ses propres yeux d'y croire, se persuader, se réitérer à haute voix que cela est. La vie sans avenir est impossible. Plus de raisonnements d'incrédule. Le cœur se lève comme un homme irrité et répond ; J'ai senti ! Vous manquez de foi, dites-vous, vous manquez de preuves, mais il suffit que vous ayez eu des sensations. À ce compte-là, il vaut bien la peine de faire rouler le wagon poétique sur les rails de la philosophie, de s'embourber les roues dans les ornières de la théologie. Aimez, souffrez, sentez, c'est très-bien ; vous êtes là dans votre droit. Cela ne prouve rien, mais cela est fort joli, mis en de beaux vers. On perd un objet aimé, on désire le revoir, on épreuve des émotions douloureuses à songer qu'on ne le reverra point. Après ? La mort, la douleur, l'oubli, la misère, voilà sans doute des choses pénibles, et que l'on voudrait éviter ; il est clair que nous ferions tous notre possible pour y échapper. Cela prouve-t-il que ces choses-là n'existent pas ? On est tenté de répondre une bonne fois à ces bonnes gens : Messieurs, vous raisonnez en poëtes, vous poétisez en raisonneurs. De grâce, soyez

l'un ou l'autre : ou bien, si vous avez les deux dons réunis, raisonnez en raisonneurs, poétisez en poëtes. Faites-nous grâce en attendant de cette poésie démontée, de cette philosophie déraillée.

" Encore un mot. La poésie n'a que faire de tout cela. Il n'y a pas de religion possible dont elle ne sache prendre son parti. Toute croyance qui émeut, qui fait vibrer, résonner, tressaillir une seule corde intérieure—toute véritable religion, sombre ou radieuse, tragique ou riante, est une chose essentiellement poétique. Partout où puisse aller la passion, l'émotion, le sentiment qui fait les martyrs, les prophètes, les vierges mystérieuses, les apôtres effrayants du bien ou du mal, partout où puissent pénétrer les terreurs mystiques, les joies énormes, les élans obscurs de la foi, il y a pour les poëtes un milieu respirable. Vénus ou Moloch, Jésus ou Brahma, n'importe. Un poëte enfermé chez lui peut être le meilleur chrétien du monde, ou bien le plus affreux païen ; ce sont là des affaires de foyer où la critique n'a rien à voir ; mais la poésie propre ne sera jamais ni ceci ni cela. Elle est tout, elle n'est rien. . . . Toute émotion lui sert, celle de l'anachorète ni plus ni moins que celle du blasphémateur. Pour la morale, elle est mauvaise et bonne, chaste et libertine ; pour la religion, elle est incrédule et fidèle, soumise et rebelle. Mais l'impuissance religieuse ou morale, mais la pensée qui boite, l'esprit qui louche, l'âme qui a peur et de se soumettre et de se révolter, la foi manquée qui pleure des larmes sceptiques, les effluves fades, tristes, nauséabonds, de la caducité spirituelle, les plantes étiolées, les sources desséchées, les pousses sans sève d'une époque douteuse

et crépusculaire—que voulez vous qu'elle fasse de tout cela? Pour elle, la négation même n'est pas stérile; chez elle, Lucrèce a sa place comme Moïse, Omar[1] comme Job; mais elle ne saurait où glisser les petites questions d'évidence, les petites tracasseries théologiques. Même en cette époque cependant nous ne manquons pas de poëtes qui sachent manier des choses hautes et sombres. Nous ne renverrons pas des écrivains anglais au sixième livre des *Contemplations*, aux sommets pour eux inabordables de la poésie actuelle, où la lumière se mêle au vertige; sans citer le grand maître, nous pourrions leur indiquer un des leurs qui a mieux fait qu'eux." Here follows the reference to Mr. Arnold's poem and to the exact passages supposed to bear upon the matter at issue. "Ce monologue lyrique est d'une ampleur, d'une droiture poétique dont on ne saurait ailleurs retrouver une trace. C'est un rude évangile qu'on vient là nous prêcher; on sent dans cette cratère des flammes éteintes; c'est lugubre pour les âmes faibles, pour les esprits à l'œil chassieux; c'est une poésie froide et ferme et forte. Voici enfin quelqu'un qui a le regard haut, le pied sûr, la parole nette, la vue large; on sait ce qu'il nous veut. Sa philosophie âpre, escarpée, impassible, est après tout meilleure consolatrice que la théologie douteuse, pleureuse, tracassière de ses rivaux."[2] In spite of his

[1] Far better than in the long literal version of Omar Khayyám which is all that the French language can show, may the soul and spirit of his thought be tasted in that most exquisite English translation, sovereignly faultless in form and colour of verse, which gives to those ignorant of the East a relish of the treasure and a delight in the beauty of its wisdom.

[2] There are varieties of opinion in this world; and the British critic's fond faith in the British thinker will not soon be shaken by

flippancy and violence of manner, I am disposed in part to agree with this critic.

Elsewhere, in minor poems, Mr. Arnold also has now and then given signs of an inclination for that sad task of sweeping up dead leaves fallen from the dying tree of belief; but has not wasted much time or strength on such sterile and stupid work. Here, at all events, he has wasted none; here is no melodious whine of retrospective and regretful scepticism; here are no cobwebs of plea and counterplea, no jungles of argument and brakes of analysis. "Ask what most helps when known;" let be the oracular and the miraculous, and vex not the soul about their truth or falsehood; the soul, which oracles and miracles can neither make nor mar, can neither slay nor save.

> "Once read thy own breast right,
> And thou hast done with fears.
> Man gets no other light,
> Search he a thousand years.
> Sink in thyself; there ask what ails thee, at that shrine."

This is the gospel of *αὐτάρκεια*, the creed of self-sufficience,[1] which sees for man no clearer or deeper duty than

the adverse verdict of any French heretic. Witness the words of a writer whom I once fell in with, heaven knows where; who, being far above the shallow errors of foolish "Greeks" and puerile "pagans," takes occasion to admonish their disciples that "*our* philosophers and poets will tell you that they have got far beyond *this* stage. The riddles *they* have to unravel involve finer issues" (and among these perhaps they might deign to expound what manner of thing may be the involution of an issue); no doubt, in a word, but they are the people, and wisdom shall die with them. They may tell us so, certainly; thought and speech are free, and for aught I know they may be fully capable of the assertion. But it is for us to choose what amount of belief it may please us to accord them.

[1] I take leave to forge this word, because "self-sufficingness"

that of intellectual self-reliance, self-dependence, self-respect; an evangel not to be cancelled or supplanted by any revelation of mystic or prophet or saint. Out of this counsel grows the exposition of obscure and afflictive things. Man's welfare—his highest sphere and state of spiritual well-doing and well-being—this indeed is his true aim; but not this is the aim of nature: the world has other work than this to do; and we, not it, must submit: submit, not by ceasing to attempt and achieve the best we can, but by ceasing to expect subservience to our own ends from all forces and influences of existing things; it is no reason or excuse for living basely instead of nobly, that we must live as the sons and not as the lords of nature. "To tunes we did not call our being must keep chime;" but this bare truth we will not accept. Philosophy, as forcibly and clearly as religion, indicates the impediments of sin and self-will; "we do not what we ought, what we ought not we do;" but there religion stops, as far as regards this world, and passes upward into a new world and life; philosophy has further to go without leaving her hold upon earth. Even were man pure, just, wise, instead of unwise, unjust, and impure, this would not affect the "other existences that clash with ours.'

is a compound of too barbaric sound, and "self-sufficiency" has fallen into a term of reproach. Archbishop Trench has pointed out how and why a word which to the ancient Greek signified a noble virtue came to signify to the modern Christian the base vice of presumption. I do not see that human language has gained by this change of meaning, or that the later mood of mind which dictated this debasement of the word is at all in advance of the older, or indicative of any spiritual improvement; rather the alteration seems to me a loss and a discredit, and the tone of thought which made the quality venerable more sound and wise than that which declares it vile.

"Like us, the lightning fires
Love to have scope and play;
The stream, like us, desires
An unimpeded way;
Like us, the Libyan wind delights to roam at large

"Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To leave his virtues room;
Nor is that wind less rough which blows a good man's barge.

"Nature, with equal mind,
Sees all her sons at play;
Sees man control the wind,
The wind sweep man away:
Allows the proudly-riding and the founder'd bark."

Again, there are "the ill-deeds of other men" to fill up the account against us of painful and perilous things. And we, instead of doing and bearing all we can under our conditions of life, must needs "cheat our pains" like children after a fall who "rate the senseless ground:"

"So, loth to suffer mute,
We, peopling the void air,
Make gods to whom to impute
The ills we ought to bear;
With God and Fate to rail at, suffering easily.

"Yet grant—as sense long miss'd
Things that are now perceiv'd,
And much may still exist
Which is not yet believ'd—
Grant that the world were full of Gods we cannot see;

"All things the world which fill
Of but one stuff are spun,
That we who rail are still,
With what we rail at, one;
One with the o'er-labour'd Power that through the breadth and length

"Of earth, and air, and sea,
In men, and plants, and stones,
Hath toil perpetually,
And struggles, pants, and moans;
Fain would do all things well, but sometimes fails in strength.

"And, patiently exact,
This universal God
Alike to any act
Proceeds at any nod,
And quietly declaims the cursings of himself.

"This is not what man hates,
Yet he can curse but this.
Harsh Gods and hostile Fates
Are dreams; this only *is*;
Is everywhere; sustains the wise, the foolish elf."

Again, we must have comfortable Gods to bless, as well as these discomfortable to curse; "kind Gods who perfect what man vainly tries;" we console ourselves for long labour and research and failure by trust in their sole and final and sufficient knowledge. Then comes the majestic stroke of reply to rebuke and confute the feeble follies of inventive hope, the futile forgeries of unprofitable comfort; scornful and solemn as the forces themselves of nature.

"Fools! that in man's brief term
He cannot all things view,
Affords no ground to affirm
That there are Gods who do;
Nor does being weary prove that he has where to rest."

In like manner, when pleasure-seekers fail of pleasure in this world, they turn their hearts Godward, and thence in the end expect that joy which the world could not give; making sure to find happiness where the foiled student makes sure to find knowledge. Again the re-

sponse from natural things unseen, or from the lips of their own wisest, confronts their fancies as before.

> "Fools! that so often here
> Happiness mocked our prayer,
> I think, might make us fear
> A like event elsewhere;
> Make us, not fly to dreams, but moderate desire."

Nor finally, when all is said, need the wise despair or repine because debarred from dreams of a distant and dubious happiness in a world outside of ours.

> "Is it so small a thing
> To have enjoyed the sun,
> To have lived light in the spring,
> To have loved, to have thought, to have done?"

The poorest villager feels that it is not so small a thing that he should not be loth to lose the little that life can yield him. Let the wiser man, like him, trust without fear the joys that are; life has room for effort and enjoyment, though at sight of the evil and sorrow it includes one may have abjured false faith and foolish hope and fruitless fear.

The majesty and composure of thought and verse, the perfect clearness and competence of words, distinguish this from other poetry of the intellect now more approved and applauded. The matter or argument is not less deep and close than clear and even in expression; although this lucidity and equality of style may diminish its material value in eyes used to the fog and ears trained to the clatter of the chaotic school. But a poem throughout so flowerless and pallid would miss much of the common charm of poetry, however imbued with the serene and

severe splendour of snows and stars. And the special crown and praise of this one is its fine and gentle alternation of tone and colour. All around the central peak, bathed in airs high as heaven and cloven with craters deep as hell, the tender slopes of hill and pasture close up and climb in gradual grace of undulation, full of sunbeams and murmurs, winds and birds. The lyric interludes of the "Empedocles" are doubtless known by heart to many ignorant of their original setting, in which they are now again enchased. We have no poet comparable for power and perfection of landscape. This quality was never made more of by critics, sought after by poets with so much care; and our literature lies in full flowerage of landscape, like Egypt after the reflux of the Nile. We have galleries full of beautiful and ingenious studies, and an imperial academy of descriptive poets. The supreme charm of Mr. Arnold's work is a sense of right resulting in a spontaneous temperance which bears no mark of curb or snaffle, but obeys the hand with imperceptible submission and gracious reserve. Other and older poets are to the full as vivid, as incisive and impressive; others have a more pungent colour, a more trenchant outline; others as deep knowledge and as fervid enjoyment of natural things. But no one has in like measure that tender and final quality of touch which tempers the excessive light and suffuses the refluent shade; which as it were washes with soft air the sides of the earth, steeps with dew of quiet and dyes with colours of repose the ambient ardour of noon, the fiery affluence of evening. His verse bathes us with fresh radiance and light rain, when weary of the violence of summer and

winter in which others dazzle and detain us; his spring wears here and there a golden waif of autumn, his autumn a rosy stray of spring. His tones and effects are pure, lucid, aërial; he knows by some fine impulse of temperance all rules of distance, of reference, of proportion; nothing is thrust or pressed upon our eyes, driven or beaten into our ears. For the instinctive selection of simple and effectual detail he is unmatched among English poets of the time, unless by Mr. Morris, whose landscape has much of the same quality, as clear, as noble, and as memorable—memorable for this especially, that you are not vexed or fretted by mere brilliance of point and sharpness of stroke, and such intemperate excellence as gives astonishment the precedence of admiration: such beauties as strike you and startle and go out. Of these it is superfluous to cite instances from the ablest of our countrymen's works; they are taught and teach that the most remote, the most elaborate, the most intricate and ingenious fashions of allusion and detail make up the best poetical style; they fill their verse with sharp-edged prettinesses, with shining surprises and striking accidents that are anything but casual; upon every limb and feature you see marks of the chisel and the plane: there is a conscious complacency of polish which seems to rebuke emulation and challenge improvement. It is otherwise with the two we have named; they are not pruned and pared into excellence, they have not so much of pungency and point; but they have breadth and ease and purity, they have largeness and sureness of eyesight; they know what to give and to withhold, what to express and to suppress. Above all, they have

air; you can breathe and move in their landscape, nor are you tripped up and caught at in passing by intrusive and singular and exceptional beauties which break up and distract the simple charm of general and single beauty, the large and musical unity of things. Their best verse is not brought straight or worked right; it falls straight because it cannot fall awry; it comes right because it cannot go wrong. And this wide and delicate sense of right makes the impression of their work so durable. The effect is never rubbed off or worn out; the hot suffering eastern life of "The Sick King in Bokhara;" the basking pastures and blowing pines about the "Church of Brou;" the morning field and midday moorland so fondly and fully and briefly painted in "Resignation;" above all, to me at least, the simple and perfect sea-side in the "Merman"—"the sandy down where the sea-stocks bloom," the white-walled town with narrow paved streets, the little grey church with rain-worn stones and small leaded panes, and blown about all the breath of wind and sound of waves—these come in and remain with us; these give to each poem the form and colour and attire it wants, and make it a distinct and complete achievement. The description does not adorn or decorate the thought; it is part of it; they have so grown into each other that they seem not welded together, but indivisible and twin-born.

Of the five songs of Callicles—whom we have left somewhat too long midway on Etna—that of Marsyas seems to me the highest and sweetest in tone, unless the first place be rather claimed for that of Cadmus and Harmonia. Others may prefer the first for its exquisite

grace of scenery, or the last for its fresh breath and light, shed on softer places than the fiery cone of Etna—for its sweetness and calm, subduing, after all, the force of flames and darkness with the serenity of stars and song ; but how fine in each one alike is the touch which relieves the scenery with personal life, Chiron's or Typho's or the sleeping shepherds' and passing Muses'. We have no word but the coarse and insufficient word *taste* to express that noble sense of harmony and high poetic propriety shown in the arrangement and composition of these lyrics ; the first, full of the bright moist breath of well-watered glen and well-wooded ford, serving as prelude with its clear soft notes to the high monotone of Empedocles ; the second, when that has ceased upon the still keen air, rising with fuller sweetness from below. Nothing can be more deep and exquisite in poetical tact than this succession of harmonies, diverse without a discord. For the absolute loveliness of sound and colour in this and the next song there are no adequate words that would not seem violent ; and violence is too far from this poetry to invade even the outlying province of commentary. It must be accepted as the "warm bay among the green Illyrian hills" accepts the sunlight, as the frame of maiden flowers and enclosure of gentle grass accept the quiet presence of the sacred snakes. No ear can forget the cadence, no eye the colour ; I am half shaken in my old preference of the next ode until I recall it from end to end :

> "That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,
> That famous, final victory,
> When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire ;

When, from far Parnassus' side,
Young Apollo, all the pride
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
To the Phrygian highlands came."

Verse stately as the step and radiant as the head of Apollo; not "like to the night" this time, but coming as the morning to the hills. How clear it makes the distance between Parnassus and Phrygia, the beautiful scorn and severe youth of the God, leaving for these long reed-beds and rippled lakes and pine-clad ridges of hill the bays and olives of his Greece; how clear the presence of the listening Muses, the advent of the hurrying Mænads, the weeping Olympus, and the implacable repose of Apollo. No poet has ever come so near the perfect Greek; he has strung with a fresh chord the old Sophoclean lyre; he has brought back the Muses from Phrygia even to Colonus;

ἔνθ'
ἁ λίγεια μινύρεται
θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀηδὼν
χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις·

he has watered afresh the fruitful foliage of that unfooted grove of the God, sunless and stormless in all seasons of wind or sun; and for him the sleepless wellsprings of Cephisus are yet unminished and unfrozen,

οὐδὲ Μουσᾶν
χοροὶ νὶν ἀπεστύγησαν, οὐδ' ἁ
χρυσάνιος Ἀφροδίτα.

Even after his master, the disciple of Sophocles holds his high place; he has matched against the Attic of the Gods this Hyperborean dialect of ours, and has not earned the doom of Marsyas. Here is indeed the triumph

of the lyre ; and he has had to refashion it for himself among a nation and in an age of flute-players and horn-blowers.

For the rest, the scheme of this poem is somewhat meagre and inefficient. Dramatic or not, the figure of Empedocles as here conceived is noble, full of a high and serene interest ; but the figure as here represented is a ghost, without form and void ; and darkness is upon the face of the deep in which his life lies stagnant ; and we look in vain for the spirit to move upon the face of the waters. Dimly and with something of discomfort and depression we perceive the shadow of the poet's design ; we discern in rough and thin outline the likeness of the wise world-wearied man, worn down and worsted in the struggle of spirit against unwisdom and change and adverse force of men and things. But how he stands thus apart among the saints and sophists, whence and whither he comes and goes, what ruin lies behind or what revolution before, we hardly see at all. Not only do we contemplate a disembodied spirit, but a spirit of which we cannot determine how it was once embodied, what forms of thought or sense it once put on, what labour and what life it once went through. There is a poetry of the bodiless intellect, which without touching with finger-tip or wing-tip the edge of actual things may be wise and sweet and fruitful and sublime ; but at least we must see the light and feel the air which guides forward and buoys upward the naked fleshless feet of the spirit. Grant that we want no details of bodily life and terrene circumstance, no touch of local or temporal colour ; we want at least an indication of the spiritual circumstance, the

spiritual influence, without which this poetry would have no matter to work upon. "Il fallait nous faire sentir l'entourage, l'habillement, le milieu respirable de cette âme nuageuse, de cet esprit fatigué." After the full effusion of spirit in his one great utterance, Empedocles has little to bring forth but fragments and relics of the soul, shadows of thin suggestion and floating complaint. The manliness and depth, the clearness and sufficiency of thought have passed from him; he is vague and weak, dissatisfied much as the commonest thinker is dissatisfied with whom all things have not gone well, to whom all things are visibly imperfect and sensibly obscure. Now the prophet of nature who spoke to us and to Pausanias in the solemn modulation of his lyric speech was more than that. There needs no ghost come from the grave—there needs no philosopher scale the summit of Etna—to tell us this that we find here: that a man had better die than live who can neither live with other men as they do nor wholly suffice to himself; that power and cunning and folly are fellows, that they are lords of life in ages of men with minds vulgar and feeble, and overcome the great and simple servants of justice and the right; that the lord of our spirit and our song, the god of all singers and all seers, is an intolerable and severe god, dividing and secluding his elect from full enjoyment of what others enjoy, in the stress and severity of solitude—sacrificing the weaker and sequestering the strong; that men on whom all these things beat and bear more heavily than they need can find no fullness of comfort or communion in the eternal elements made of like matter with us, but better made, nor in any beauty nor in any life of the

laborious and sleepless soul of things ; that even when all other components of our transient nature are duly and happily resolved into those durable elements, the insoluble and inevitable riddle of mind and thought must vex us to the last as at the first.

> " We know all this, we know !
> Cam'st thou from heaven, O child
> Of light ! but this to declare ?
> Alas ! to help us forget
> Such barren knowledge awhile,
> God gave the poet his song."

Not that such barren knowledge is ignoble or inadequate matter for poetry ; only it must assume something of the dramatic form and circumstance which here are scantily supplied. Less scanty is the supply of noble verses such as these :

> " But we received the shock of mighty thoughts
> On simple minds with a pure natural joy ; "

verses in the highest tone of Wordsworth's, as clear and grave as his best, as close and full and majestic. The good and evil influence of that great poet, perverse theorist, and incomplete man, upon Mr. Arnold's work is so palpable and so strong as to be almost obtrusive in its effects. He is the last worth reckoning whom the " Excursion " is ever likely to misguide. The incalculable power of Wordsworth on certain minds for a certain time could not but be and could not but pass over. Part of this singular power was doubtless owing to the might of will, the solid individual weight of mind, which moulded his work into the form he chose for it ; part to the strong assumption and high self-reliance which grew in him so close to self-confidence and presumption ; part to the

sublimity and supremacy of his genius in its own climate and proper atmosphere—one which forbids access to all others and escape to him, since only there can he breathe and range, and he alone can breathe and range there; part to the frequent vapour that wraps his head and the frequent dust that soils his feet, filling the simpler sort with admiration of one so lofty at once and so familiar; and part, I fear, to the quality which no other great poet ever shared or can share with him, to his inveterate and invincible Philistinism, his full community of spirit and faith, in certain things of import, with the vulgarest English mind—or that which with the Philistine does duty for a mind. To those who like Shelley and Landor could see and mark this indomitable dullness and thickness of sense which made him mix with magnificent and flawless verse the "enormous folly" of "those stupid staves," his pupils could always point out again the peculiar and unsurpassable grandeur and splendour of his higher mood; and it was vain to reply that these could be seen and enjoyed without condonation or excuse of his violent and wearisome perversities. This is what makes his poetry such unwholesome and immoral reading for Philistines; they can turn round upon their rebukers, and say, "Here is one of us who by your own admission is also one of the great poets;" and no man can give them the lie; and the miserable men are confirmed in their faith and practice by the shameful triumph.

It will be a curious problem for the critics of another age to work at, and if they can to work out, this influence of men more or less imbued with the savour and spirit of Philistia upon the moral Samson who has played

for our behoof the part of Agonistes or protagonist in the new Gaza where we live. From the son of his father and the pupil of his teacher none would have looked for such efficient assault and battery of the Philistine outworks; none but those who can appreciate the certain and natural force, in a strong and well-tempered spirit, of loyal and unconscious reaction. I say reaction, and not revolt; he has assuredly nothing of the bad, perhaps not enough of the good stuff, which goes to make a rebel. He is loyal, not to a fault, but to the full; yet no man's habit of mind or work can be less like that which men trained in other schools expect from a scholar of Rydal or of Rugby. A profane alien in my hearing once defined him as "David the son of Goliath;" and when rebuked for the flat irreverence, avowed himself unable to understand how such a graft could have ever been set by the head gardener of the main hotbed of Philistine saplings now flourishing in England. It is certain that the opinion put forth with such flippant folly of phrase is common to many of the profane, and not explicable by mere puerile prejudice or sentiment; and that students of Rugby or of Rydal, vocal and inarticulate, poetic and prosaic, are not seldom recognisable through certain qualities which, if any be, are undeniably Philistine. Whatever these schools have of good, their tendency is to cultivate all the merits recognised and suppress all the merits unrecognised in Ascalon or in Gath. I will not call up witnesses past or present from the realms of prose or verse, of practice or theory: it would be a task rather invidious than difficult.

Son of Goliath or son of Jesse, this David or Samson

or Jephthah of our days, the man who has taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight against the Philistines, must as a poet have sat long and reverently at the feet of their Gamaliel. And as when there is high and pure genius on either side a man cannot but get good from the man he admires, and as it was so in this case if ever in any, he must have got good from that source over and above the certain and common good which the sense of reverence does to us all. The joy of worship, the delight of admiration, is in itself so excellent and noble a thing that even error cannot make it unvenerable or unprofitable; no one need repent of reverence, though he find flaws or cavities in his idol; it has done him good to worship, though there were no godhead behind the shrine. To shut his eyes upon disproof and affirm the presence of a god found absent, this indeed is evil; but this is not an act of reverence or of worship; this is the brute fatuity of cowardice, the violent impotence of fear; wanting alike what is good and fruitful in belief and what is heroic and helpful in disbelief; witness (for the most part) the religious and political, moral and æsthetic scriptures of our own time, the huge canonical roll of the Philistine. Nothing can be more unlike such ignoble and sluggard idolatry than the reverence now expressed and now implied by Mr. Arnold for the doctrine and example of Wordsworth. His memorial verses at once praise and judge the great poet then newly dead better than any words of other men; they have the still clear note, the fresh breath as of the first fields and birds of spring awakened in a serene dawn, which is in Wordsworth's own verse. With wider eyes

and keener, he has inherited the soothing force of speech and simple stroke of hand with which Wordsworth assuaged and healed the weariness and the wounds of his time ; to his hands the same appeasing spells and sacred herbs that fell from the other's when they relaxed in death have been committed by the gods of healing song. The elder physician of souls had indeed something too much of Æsculapius in him, something too little of Apollo his father ; nevertheless the lineal and legitimate blood was apparent.

This elegy and the poem headed "Resignation" are in my eyes the final flower of Mr. Arnold's poems after Wordsworth—as I take leave to qualify a certain division of his work. The second of these is an unspotted and unbroken model of high calm thought couched in pure and faultless words ; the words more equal and the vision more clear than his old teacher's, more just in view and more sure in grasp of nature and life. Imbued with the old faith at once in the necessity of things and in the endurance of man, it excels in beauty and in charm the kindred song of Empedocles ; from first to last there rests upon it a serene spell, a sad supremacy of still music that softens and raises into wisdom the passionless and gentle pain of patience ; the charm of earth and sorrowful magic of things everlasting ; the spell that is upon the patient hills and immutable rocks, at work and asleep in "the life of plants and stones and rain" ; the life to which we too may subdue our souls and be wise. At times he writes simply as the elder poet might have written, without sensible imitation, but with absolute identity of style and sentiment ; at times his larger tone

of thought, his clearer accent of speech, attest the difference of the men. So perfect and sweet in speech, so sound and lucid in thought as the pupil is at his best, the master seldom was; and at his best the pupil is no more seen, and in his stead is a new master. He has nothing of Wordsworth's spirit of compromise with the nature of things, nothing of his moral fallacies and religious reservations; he can see the face of facts and read them with the large and frank insight of ancient poets; none of these ever had a more profound and serene sense of fate. But he has not grasped, and no man I suppose will ever grasp, the special and imperial sceptre of his elder. The incommunicable, the immitigable might of Wordsworth when the god has indeed fallen upon him cannot but be felt by all, and can but be felt by any; none can partake or catch it up. There are many men greater than he; there are men much greater; but what he has of greatest is his only. His concentration, his majesty, his pathos have no parallel; some have gone higher, many lower, none have touched precisely the same point as he; some poets have had more of all these qualities, and better; none have had exactly his gift. His pathos for instance cannot be matched against any other man's; it is trenchant, and not tender; it is an iron pathos. Take for example the most passionate of his poems, the "Affliction of Margaret;" it is hard and fiery, dry and persistent as the agony of a lonely and a common soul which endures through life, a suffering which runs always in one groove without relief or shift. Because he is dull and dry and hard, when set by the side of a great lyrist or dramatist; because of these faults

and defects, he is so intense and irresistible when his iron hand has hold of some chord which it knows how to play upon. How utterly unlike his is the pathos of Homer or Æschylus, Chaucer or Dante, Shakespeare or Hugo; all these greater poets feel the moisture and flame of the fever and the tears they paint; their pathos when sharpest is full of sensitive life, of subtle tenderness, of playing pulses and melting colours; his has but the downright and trenchant weight of swinging steel; he strikes like the German headsman, one stroke of a loaded sword. This could not be done even by the poets who could do more and better than this. His metre too is sublime, his choice or chance of language casual or chosen has miraculous effects in it, when he feels his foot firm on ground fit for him; otherwise his verse is often hard as wood and dry as dust and weak as water. In this as in other ways his influence has been now good and now bad. The grave cadence of such a poem as the "Resignation," in this point also one of Mr. Arnold's most noble and effective, bears with it a memory and a resonance of the master's music, such as we find again in the lovely single couplets and lines which now and then lift up the mind or lull it in the midst of less excellent verse; such for instance as these, which close a scale of lower melodies, in a poem not wholly or equally pleasurable: but these are faultless verses and full of the comfort of music, which tell us how, wafted at times from the far-off verge of the soul,

> "As from an infinitely distant land,
> Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
> A melancholy into all our day."

These have a subtle likeness to Wordsworth's purer notes, a likeness undefined and unborrowed; the use of words usually kept back for prose (such as "convey") is a trick of Wordsworth's which either makes or mars a passage; here the touch, it may be by accident, strikes the exact chord wanted, elicits the exact tone.

But indeed, as with all poets of his rank, so with Mr. Arnold, the technical beauty of his work is one with the spiritual; art, a poet's art above all others, cannot succeed in this and fail in that. Success or achievement of an exalted kind on the spiritual side ensures and enforces a like executive achievement or success; if the handiwork be flawed, there must also have been some distortion or defect of spirit, a shortcoming or a misdirection of spiritual supply. There is no such thing as a dumb poet or a handless painter. The essence of an artist is that he should be articulate. It is the mere impudence of weakness to arrogate the name of poet or painter with no other claim than a susceptible and impressible sense of outward or inward beauty, producing an impotent desire to paint or sing. The poets that are made by nature are not many; and whatever "vision" an aspirant may possess, he has not the "faculty divine" if he cannot use his vision to any poetic purpose. There is no cant more pernicious to such as these, more wearisome to all other men, than that which asserts the reverse. It is a drug which weakens the feeble and intoxicates the drunken; which makes those swagger who have not learnt to walk, and teach who have not been taught to learn. Such talk as this of Wordsworth's is the poison of poor souls like

David Gray's.[1] Men listen, and depart with the belief that they have this faculty or this vision which alone, they are told, makes the poet; and once imbued with that belief, soon pass or slide from the inarticulate to the articulate stage of debility and disease. Aspiration foiled and impotent is a piteous thing enough, but friends and teachers of this sort make it ridiculous as well. A man can no more win a place among poets by dreaming of it or lusting after it than he can win by dream or desire a woman's beauty or a king's command; and those encourage him to fill his belly with the east wind

[1] This was a poor young Scotchman who may be remembered as having sought and found help and patronage at the hands first of Mr. Dobell and afterwards of Lord Houghton. In some of his sonnets there are touches of sweet and sincere emotion; but the most remarkable points in his poor little book, and those which should be most memorable to other small poets of his kind (if at least the race of them were capable of profiting by any such lesson), are first the direct and seemingly unconscious transference of some of the best known lines or phrases from such obscure authors as Shakespeare and Wordsworth into the somewhat narrow and barren field of his own verse, and secondly the incredible candour of expression given in his correspondence to such flatulent ambition and such hysterical self-esteem as the author of "Balder" must have regarded, I should think, with a sorrowful sense of amusement. I may add that the poor boy's name was here cited with no desire to confer upon it any undeserved notoriety for better or for worse, and assuredly with no unkindlier feeling than pity for his poor little memory, but simply as conveying the most apt and the most flagrant as well as the most recent instance I happened to remember of the piteous and grievous harm done by false teaching and groundless encouragement to spirits not strong enough to know their own weakness. It was a kindly but uncritical reference in Mr. Arnold's kindly but uncritical essay on Maurice de Guérin—an essay of which I have said a few words further on—that upon this occasion for once recalled the name to my mind, and supplied me with the illustration required.

who feign to accept the will for the deed, and treat inarticulate or inadequate pretenders as actual associates in art. The Muses can bear children and Apollo can give crowns to those only who are able to win the crown and beget the child; but in the school of theoretic sentiment it is apparently believed that this can be done by wishing.

Small things suffice to give immediate proof or disproof of the requisite power. In music or in painting all men admit this for a truth; it is not less certain in poetry. There is nothing in either of the poets I speak of more distinctive and significant than the excellence of their best sonnets. These are almost equally noble in style; though the few highest of Wordsworth's remain out of reach of emulation, not out of sight of worship. Less adorable and sublime, not less admirable and durable, Mr. Arnold's hold their own in the same world of poetry with these. All in this new volume are full of beauty, sound and sweet fruits of thought and speech that have ripened and brought forth together; the poetry of religious thought when most pure and most large has borne no fairer than that one on the drawing in the Catacombs of the Good Shepherd bearing the young, not of a sheep, but of a goat; or that other on the survival of grace and spirit when the body of belief lies dead; but all, I repeat, have a singular charm and clearness. I have used this word already more than once or twice; it comes nearest of all I can find to the thing I desire to express; that natural light of mind, that power of reception and reflection of things or thoughts, which I most admire in so much of Mr. Arnold's work. I mean by it much more than mere facility or transparency; more than brilliance,

more than ease or excellence of style. It is a quality begotten by instinct upon culture; one which all artists of equal rank possess in equal measure.

There are in the English language three elegiac poems so great that they eclipse and efface all the elegiac poetry we know; all of Italian, all of Greek. It is only because the latest born is yet new to us that it can seem strange or rash to say so. The "Thyrsis" of Mr. Arnold makes a third with "Lycidas" and "Adonais." It is not so easy as those may think who think by rote and praise by prescription to strike the balance between them. The first however remains first, and must remain; its five opening lines are to me the most musical in all known realms of verse; there is nothing like them; and it is more various, more simple, more large and sublime than the others; lovelier and fuller it cannot be.

> "The leader is fairest,
> But all are divine."

The least pathetic of the three is "Adonais," which indeed is hardly pathetic at all; it is passionate, subtle, splendid; but "Thyrsis," like "Lycidas," has a quiet and tender undertone which gives it something of sacred. Shelley brings fire from heaven, but these bring also "the meed of some melodious tear." There is a grace ineffable, a sweet sound and sweet savour of things past, in the old beautiful use of the language of shepherds, of flocks and pipes; the spirit is none the less sad and sincere because the body of the poem has put on this dear familiar raiment of romance; because the crude and naked sorrow is veiled and chastened with soft shadows

and sounds of a "land that is very far off"; because the verse remembers and retains a perfume and an echo of Grecian flutes and flowers,

> "Renews the golden world, and holds through all
> The holy laws of homely pastoral,
> Where flowers and founts, and nymphs and semi-gods,
> And all the Graces find their old abodes."

Here, as in the "Scholar Gipsy," the beauty, the delicacy and affluence of colour, the fragrance and the freedom as of wide wings of winds in summer over meadow and moor, the freshness and expansion of the light and the lucid air, the spring and the stream as of flowing and welling water, enlarge and exalt the pleasure and power of the whole poem. Such English-coloured verse no poet has written since Shakespeare, who chooses his field-flowers and hedgerow blossoms with the same sure and loving hand, binds them in as simple and sweet an order. All others, from Milton downward to Shelley and onward from him, have gathered them singly or have mixed them with foreign buds and alien bloom. No poem in any language can be more perfect as a model of style, unsurpassable certainly, it may be unattainable. Any couplet, any line proves it. No countryman of ours since Keats died has made or has found words fall into such faultless folds and forms of harmonious line. He is the most efficient, the surest-footed poet of our time, the most to be relied on; what he does he is the safest to do well; more than any other he unites personality and perfection; others are personal and imperfect, perfect and impersonal; with them you must sometimes choose between inharmonious freedom and harmonious bond-

age. Above all, he knows what as a poet he should do, and simply does that; the manner of his good work is never more or less than right; his verse comes clean and full out of the mould, cast at a single jet; placed beside much other verse of the time, it shows like a sculptor's work by an enameller's. With all their wealth and warmth of flowers and lights, these two twin poems are solid and pure as granite or as gold. Their sweet sufficiency of music, so full and calm, buoys and bears up throughout the imperial vessel of thought. Their sadness is not chill or sterile, but as the sorrow of summer pausing with laden hands on the middle height of the year, the watershed that divides the feeding fountains of autumn and of spring; a grave and fruitful sadness, the triumphant melancholy of full-blown flowers and souls full-grown. The stanzas from the sixth to the fourteenth of "Thyrsis," and again from the sixteenth to the twentieth, are if possible the most lovely in either poem; the deepest in tone and amplest in colour; the choiceness and sweetness of single lines and phrases most exquisite and frequent.

"O easy access to the hearer's grace,
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But, ah! of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumnor cowslips never stirred;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain."

She has learnt to know them now, the river and the river-meadows, and access is as easy for an English as a Dorian

prayer to the most gentle of all worshipped gods. It is a triumphal and memorial poem, a landmark in the high places of verse to which future travellers studious of the fruits and features of the land may turn and look up and see what English hands could rear.

This is probably the highest point of Mr. Arnold's poetry, though for myself I cannot wholly resign the old preference of things before familiar; of one poem in especial, good alike for children and men, the "Forsaken Merman;" which has in it the pathos of natural things, the tune of the passion we fancy in the note of crying birds or winds weeping, shrill and sweet and estranged from us; the swift and winged wail of something lost midway between man's life and the life of things soulless, the wail overheard and caught up by the fitful northern fancy, filling with glad and sad spirits the untravelled ways of nature; the clear cry of a creature astray in the world, wild and gentle and mournful, heard in the sighing of weary waters before dawn under a low wind, in the rustle and whistle and whisper of leaves or grasses, in the long light breaths of twilight air heaving all the heather on the hills, in the coming and going of the sorrowful strong seas that bring delight and death, in the tender touch and recoil of the ripple from the sand; all the fanciful pitiful beauty of dreams and legends born in grey windy lands on shores and hill-sides whose life is quiet and wild. No man's hand has pressed from the bells and buds of the moors and downs by cape or channel of the north a sweeter honey than this. The song is a piece of the sea-wind, a stray breath of the air and bloom of the bays and hills: its mixture of mortal sorrow with the strange wild sense of a

life that is not after mortal law—the childlike moan after lost love mingling with the pure outer note of a song not human—the look in it as of bright bewildered eyes with tears not theirs and alien wonder in the watch of them—the tender, marvellous, simple beauty of the poem, its charm as of a sound or a flower of the sea—set it and save it apart from all others in a niche of the memory. This has all the inexplicable inevitable sweetness of a child's or a bird's in its note ; "Thyrsis" has all the accomplished and adult beauty of a male poem. In the volume which it crowns there is certainly no new jewel of equal water. "Palladium" is a fresh sample of the noble purity and clearness which we find always and always praise in his reflective poetry ; its cool aërial colour like that of a quiet sky between full sunset and full moonrise, made ready for the muster of the stars, swept clean of cloud and flame, and laved with limpid unruffled air from western green to eastern grey ; a sky the cenotaph of unburied sunlight, the mould of moonlight unborn. "A Southern Night" is steeped in later air, as gentle and more shining ; the stanzas on the Grande Chartreuse are stamped with the impression of a solemn charm, and so the new verses on Obermann,[1] the new verses on Marguerite, strange to read

[1] Among these the stanzas on the advent of Christianity, of "the Mother with the Child," and their enduring life while only faith in them endured, recall the like passage, more thoughtful and fruitful still, in that wise and noble poem, Mr. W. B. Scott's "Year of the World" ; a poem to whose great qualities and affluent beauties of letter and of spirit the requisite and certain justice of time remains hitherto a debt unpaid. Its author must divide with Mr. Arnold the palm of intellectual or philosophic poetry, the highest achieved in England since Wordsworth, and in many things of momen: higher than his.

for those who remember reading the first at the time when all the loves we read of assume a form and ascend a throne in our thoughts, the old and the new side by side, so that now this poem comes under our eyes like a new love-song of Petrarca to Laura or Coleridge to Geneviève. It is fine and high in tone, but not such as the famous verses, cited and admired even by critics sparing of their priceless praise, beginning

"Yes, in this sea of life enisled—."

These in their profound and passionate calm strike deeper and sound fuller than any other of the plaintive dejected songs of Switzerland. "Dover Beach" marks another high point in the volume; it has a grand choral cadence as of steady surges, regular in resonance, not fitful or gusty but antiphonal and reverberate. But nothing of new verse here clings closer to the mind than the overture of that majestic fragment from the chorus of a "Dejaneira."

> "O frivolous mind of man,
> Light ignorance, and hurrying, unsure thoughts,
> Though man bewails you not,
> How I bewail you!"

We must hope to have more of the tragedy in time; that must be a noble statue which could match this massive fragment. The story of Merope, though dramatic enough in detail, is upon the whole more of a narrative romance than a tragic subject; in Mr. Arnold's poem the deepest note is that struck by the tyrant Polyphontes, whose austere and patient figure is carved with Sophoclean skill of hand. It is a poem which Milton might have praised, an august work, of steady aim and severe success; but this of Dejaneira has in it a loftier promise and a

larger chance. Higher matter of tragedy there can be none; none more intense and impressive, none fuller of keen and profound interest, none simpler and statelier; none where the weight and gravity, the sweetness and shapeliness of pure thought, could be better or closelier allied with the warmth and width of common tenderness and passion. We must all hope that the poet will keep to this clear air of the ancient heights, more natural and wholesome for the spirit than the lowlands of depression and dubiety where he has set before now a too frequent foot. This alone I find profitless and painful in his work; this occasional habit of harking back and loitering in mind among the sepulchres. Nothing is to be made by an artist out of scepticism, half-hearted or double-hearted doubts or creeds; nothing out of mere dejection and misty mental weather. Tempest or calm you may put to use, but hardly a flat fog. In not a few of his former poems, in some reprinted here, there is a sensible and stagnant influence of moist vapour from those marshes of the mind where weaker souls paddle and plunge and disappear. Above these levels the sunnier fields and fresher uplands lie wide and warm; and there the lord of the land should sit at peace among his good things. If a spirit by nature clear and high, a harmonious and a shining soul, does ever feel itself "immured in the hot prison of the present," its fit work is not to hug but break its chain; and only by its own will or weakness can it remain ill at ease in a thick and difficult air. Of such poetry I would say what Joubert, as cited by Mr. Arnold, says of all coarse and violent literature: it may be produced in any amount of supply to any excess of effect, but it is no proper

matter of pure art, and "the soul says all the while, You hurt me." Deep-reaching doubt and "large discourse" are poetical ; so is faith, so are sorrow and joy ; but so are not the small troubles of spirits that nibble and quibble about beliefs living or dead ; so are not those sickly moods which are warmed and weakened by feeding on the sullen drugs of dejection ; and the savour of this disease and its medicines is enough to deaden the fresh air of poetry. Nothing which leaves us depressed is a true work of art. We must have light though it be lightning, and air though it be storm.

Where the thought goes wrong, the verse follows after it. In Mr. Arnold's second book there was more of weak or barren matter, and more therefore of feeble or faulty metre. Rhyme is the native condition of lyric verse in English ; a rhymeless lyric is a maimed thing, and halts and stammers in the delivery of its message. There are some few in the language as good as rare ; but the habit or rule is bad. The fragments of his "Antigone" and "Dejaneira" no reader can wish other than they are ; and the chorus for example in "Merope" which tells of Arcas and Callisto is a model of noble form and colour ; but it does not fasten at once upon the memory like a song of Callicles, or like the "Merman," or like any such other. To throw away the natural grace of rhyme from a modern song is a wilful abdication of half the power and half the charm of verse. It is hard to realise and hopeless to reproduce the musical force of classic metres so recondite and exquisite as the choral parts of a Greek play. Even Milton could not ; though with his godlike instinct and his godlike might of hand he made a kind

of strange and enormous harmony by intermixture of assonance and rhyme with irregular blank verse, as in that last Titanic chorus of Samson which utters over the fallen Philistines the trumpet-blast and thunder of its triumph. But Milton, it may be said, even if he knew them, did not obey the laws of the choral scheme, and so forfeited the legitimate condition of its music. Who then has observed those laws and obtained that success which he did not? I scarcely think that Mr. Arnold has; and if ever man was qualified for the work it is he only. I have never seen other attempts at rhymeless choral metre which were not mere amorphous abortions of misshapen prose, halting on helpless broken limbs and feet. A poet of Mr. Arnold's high station cannot of course but write in verse, and in good verse as far as the kind will allow; but that is not far enough to attain the ultimate goal, to fill up the final measure of delight. We lose something of the glory and the joy of poetry, of which he has no reason and no right to defraud us. It is in no wise a question of scholarship, or in the presence of a scholar I should be silent; as it is, I must say how inexplicable it seems to me that Mr. Arnold, of all men, should be a patron of English hexameters. His own I have tried in vain to reduce by scansion into any metrical feet at all; they look like nothing on earth, and sound like anapæsts broken up and driven wrong; neither by ear nor by finger can I bring them to any reckoning. I am sure of one thing, that some of them begin with a pure and absolute anapæst; and how a hexameter can do this it passes my power to conceive. And at best what ugly bastards of verse are these self-styled hexameters! how human tongues or

hands could utter or could write them except by way of burlesque improvisation I could never imagine, and never shall. Once only, to be candid—and I will for once show all possible loyalty and reverence to past authority—once only, as far as I know, in Dr. Hawtrey's delicate and fluent verse, has the riddle been resolved ; the verses are faultless, are English, are hexametric ; but that is simply a graceful interlude of pastime, a well-played stroke in a game of skill played with language. Such as pass elsewhere for English hexameters I do hope and suppose impossible to Eton. Mr. Clough's I will not presume to be serious attempts or studies in any manner of metre ; they are admirable studies in graduated prose, full of fine sound and effect. Even Mr. Kingsley's "Andromeda," the one good poem extant in that pernicious metre, for all its spirit and splendour, for all the grace and glory and exultation of its rushing and ringing words, has not made possible the impossible thing. Nothing but loose rhymeless anapæsts can be made of the language in that way ; and we hardly want these, having infinite command and resource of metre without them, and rhyme thrown in to turn the overweighted scale. I am unwilling to set my face against any doctrine or practice of a poet such as Mr. Arnold, but on this matter of metre I was moved to deliver my soul.

This is not the only example in his writings of some quality which seems to me intrusive and incoherent with his full general accuracy and clearness. These points of view and heads of theory which in my eyes seem out of perspective do indeed cohere each with the other ; but hardly with his own high practice and bright intuition of

the best thing. His alliance is so precious against the mailed and gowned array of the Philistines, that the least defection, the least error of movement, imperils more than his own position; a whole regiment may be misled into ruin by the general, while the heat and burden of the day lie before us yet. No man has done so much to exalt and to correct men's view of the higher criticism and its office. Wherever therefore in things great or small he outruns or falls short of the immediate goal of a just judgment, the instant aim of a pure argument, it is worth while to take note of the slippery or oblique reasoning, or at least to sift and strain it, on the chance that here may be some error. "The light of the body is the eye;" he is the eye of English criticism; and if ever for some passing purblind minute the light that is in that body be darkness, how great indeed is that darkness! Dark however he properly never is, but I think at times oblique or drowsy. He has smitten the Janus of Philistine worship on one face; under the other, if he has not himself burnt a pinch or two of adulterate incense, he has encouraged or allowed others to burn. At the portal by which English devotees press thickest into the temple of Dagon he has stood firm as in a breach, and done good service; but he has left unguarded other points of entrance. All that is said in his essays on the religious tradition and the religious idea, as opposed to Philistine demolition or to Philistine edification, I accept and admire as truth, excellent if not absolute, and suggestive if not final; but from his own vantage ground of meditation and idea I start my objection to this inference and that. Protestantism, conservative and destructive,

is the form in which the enemy has appeared to him ; such in his eyes has been the banner, such the watch-word under which they serve. All Philistia for him is resumed in the English Philistine ; who may probably be the most noisome example in the world, but is assuredly not the only one. I do not say that marriage dissoluble only in an English divorce court is a lovely thing or a venerable ; I do say that marriage indissoluble except by Papal action is not. It is irrelevant and unfair for a soldier of light to ally himself with Philistine against Philistine. From the ideal point of meditation to which he would recall us, where the pure justice and the naked beauty of thought are alone held sacred, I cannot "find the marriage theory of Catholicism refreshing and elevating" merely because the Protestant theory, which "neither makes divorce impossible nor makes it decent," has assumed in English law-courts a gross and hideous incarnation. What is anomalous, what is unjust, cannot surely be beautiful to purged eyes looking from "the ideal sphere." Of course the idea of a lifelong union has its beauty and significance ; so has the idea of liberty and sincerity of action. Faith is good, and freedom is good ; the office of the idea is to give free play and full justice to both. The Philistines on either side would fain draw sharper and harder the lines of demarcation and division ; the thinkers on neither side would fain not reject but reconcile.

Again, it is doubtless the best and most direct service that a critic can do his countrymen to strip and smite their especial errors, to point out and fence off their peculiar pitfalls ; and this Mr. Arnold has done for his

English not once or twice only. I doubt if he has ever assailed or advised them without due cause: in one point above all he has done them most loyal and liberal service; he has striven to purge them of the pestilence of provincial thought and tradition, of blind theory and brute opinion, of all that hereditary policy of prejudice which substitutes self-esteem for self-culture, self-worship for self-knowledge; which clogs and encrusts all powers and all motions of the mind with a hard husk of mechanical conceit. And here, heaven knows, in his dull dumb way the Briton stands ahead of all men, towers above all men in stolid and sublime solitude, a massive, stupid, inarticulate god and priest in one; his mute and majestic autolatry is a deeper and more radical religion than the self-love of other nations, the more vocal vanities of France or America. In the stone walls and iron girders of this faith our champion has done what a man may to make a breach; and the weapon was well chosen, the brand of provinciality, wherewith to stamp and mark that side of the double-faced head of Dagon which looks towards us with English features. But, to use his own term, there are two notes of provinciality perceptible, one or other, in most criticism of foreign things; error in praise and error in dispraise. He could have prescribed for the soul-sick British Philistine, "sick of self-love," no better method of cure than study and culture of the French spirit, of its flexible intelligence and critical ambition, its many-sided faith in perfection, in possible excellence and ideal growth outward and upward, and the single-hearted love of all these which goes hand in hand with that faith. Faith in light

and motion is what England has not and France has ; often a blind, erring, heretical faith, often perverse and fanatical, a faith which kills its prophets and stones its protomartyrs ; but in art as in politics, in literature as in ethics, an active and a living faith. To show this to English eyes and impress upon English ears its truth and its importance is to do a good work ; but to pass from general doctrine to example and detail is hard and unsafe for a foreign preacher. Those who deserve gratitude at our hands deserve also candour ; and I must in candour say that Mr. Arnold is not a sure guide over French ground. He does not know quite how the land lies : he turns down this declivity or stops short by that well-head, where a native guide would hardly bid one halt. With a large and fine appreciation of the beauties and capacities of the national character, with a justice and strength of insight into these which compared with an average English judgment are wonderful and admirable, he has not the eyes and the nerves of one to the manner born, the sudden and sensitive intuition of an innate instinct : he thinks right, but he feels wrong ; some men are right without being reasonable, he is reasonable without being right. He sets up a rational argument to prove why France should be, and why she is, weak in poetry and strong in prose ; a very keen and clear argument, only the facts are all against it. Of classic verse Mr. Arnold is so much more competent to speak than I am that I dare not press the debateable question of choric metre ; but of French verse I must have leave to say that he is not competent to speak. His touch has in it no pulse or play of French blood ; his fine ear is deaf on that side.

It would clearly be impossible to show him, to make him feel, the silent horror and wonder with which other ears receive such utterances from him as from the common Briton we expect and accept with all composure. Whether it be "the German paste in his composition" which so far thickens and deadens his subtle sense of song, I cannot say; but I can say that in that case it would be well for him to get quit of it. The cadence and impulse of harmonies in French verse are of course unlike those in English verse or Italian, and the laws which are their outgrowth are unlike too; but the one is not more sure and satisfying than the other: only there must be the right hands to play and the right ears to hear. Mr. Arnold says that a Frenchman born with the faculty or instinct of poetry finds in prose a fuller and easier expression than in verse. As justly might a French critic say this of an Englishman. In either case, the man who is a poet or nothing must be judged by his power of writing verse. If he can neither do that well nor do any other work, whatever his charm of aspiration and sentiment and sincerity may be, he slips into the second rank as surely if French as if English. Imagine that Frenchman's tone of mind, or his tone of ear, who should proclaim the inadequacy of a language which has sufficed for all the great lyric poets of France, all the copious and glorious roll from François Villon and Charles of Orleans to Victor Hugo and Théophile Gautier, but is now convicted of inaptitude to render in full the sentiments of a Maurice de Guérin! The English poet is here hopelessly at sea without oar or rudder, haven or guiding-star. He cannot even be trusted to speak of the academic

poets, easier though they are of access and apprehension even to the run of Englishmen. The thin, narrow, shallow, but very real melodies of Racine are as inaudible to him as the mightier symphonies of the great school; this perhaps, as he says, is natural in a foreigner. But no such excuse will serve for the confusion of judgment which places on a level the very best man of his kind, Pope, and Boileau, the very worst. Perhaps their respective Odes on St. Cecilia's Day and the Siege of Namur may be allowed to pair off as the shamefullest two lyrical poems in the world; but compare for a moment their general work, their didactic and satirical verse! the comparison is an insult too absurd to affect the Englishman. He is the finest, Boileau the dullest craftsman of their age and school.

It is singular and significant that Mr. Arnold, himself established and acknowledged as a poet standing in the first rank among his own people, has chosen for special praise and patronage men who have tried their hands at his work and failed, men who have fallen back baffled from the cliff-side he has climbed. Again I cite the evidence of his French critic; who naturally feels that he has paid the French but a poor compliment in praising as their best men those who fall short of their own aim and his achievement: "Il y a quelque chose de louche, de suspect, dans les louanges que prodigue aux poëtes manqués un poëte réussi. Or, parmi tous les nôtres c'est à M. Sainte-Beuve, poëte manqué dont le temps a fait un critique réussi, que le poëte anglais adresse son hommage respectueux. Il a eu mille fois raison d'étudier, d'apprécier, de louer cet illustre écrivain; il n'a peut-être pas eu

tort de le suivre les yeux fermés lorsqu'il s'envole à tire d'ailes dans les nuages du paradoxe, de le croire sur parole quand il affirme qu'on peut être grand poëte tout en échouant dans le champ poétique : pour moi, je préfère, soit dit en passant, les peintres qui sachent peindre, les médecins qui sachent guérir, les poëtes qui font des vers. Passons-lui ces spécialités ; ce n'est pas une raison d'affirmer qu'il ne saurait être en France de meilleurs poëtes que ces prosateurs, de plus forts travailleurs que ces lutteurs étiques, que ces génies tronqués. Quand on dénonce chez autrui les jugements saugrenus, les bêtises réciproques de l'esprit insulaire et provincial, il faudrait se garder par exemple de ranger au niveau des grands poëtes les talents délicats, de prendre pour des Keats les Maurice de Guérin, pauvres belles âmes étiolées, douces et frêles petites fleurs effeuillées en pleine éclosion. Ces roses pâles, ces pousses maladives, ont bien leur charme et leur parfum, valent bien la peine qu'on les arrose et les recueille ; mais on ne tresse point avec celles-là les grandes couronnes poétiques."

The gentle pupil of Lamennais is to Mr. Arnold what the lesser celandine was to Wordsworth : he has unearthed a new favourite, and must have some three or four who will love his little flower. It were churlish and foolish to refuse ; the small petals are fresh and dewy, the slim stem bends and sways with a sylvan grace. But it is something too much to hold up a bit of pilewort as the rose of Sharon ; it provokes one to deny the poor blossom a place among flowers at all : it is indecorous and ludicrous. The "Centaur" is really so fine and graceful a little study, there are really such delicate and

distinctive touches of expression and feeling, such traces of a bright clear sense of beauty and charm and meaning in nature, that it was but just, when the man was well dead and could get no good of it and no harm, to praise him without grudging and pick up his leavings as a windfall. A place in the cabinet of M. Sainte-Beuve was no more than his desert. But the place which Mr. Arnold assigns him is reserved for men far other than this tender dreamer: five minutes of their life outweigh five centuries of such lives as his; one breath of the common air of their spirit would burn up the little tremulous soul as with fire. No tender Semele, but the queen of heaven alone, can face and enjoy the lightning of heaven. Of the contact of mortal and immortal, ashes are the only fruits. In Keats there was something of the spirit and breath of the world, of the divine life of things; in Guérin there was hardly a soft breathless pulse of fluttering sympathy; here was the *anima mundi*, made flesh once more in the body of a divine interpreter such as all great poets must be after their kind; there was the *animula vagula, blandula*, of a tentative, sensitive, impressible nature; full of little native pieties and sincere little sensibilities, amiable and laudable enough. But the demigods of our kind are not cast in such clay as that. M. Sainte-Beuve knew better than Mr. Arnold what was the rank and what the kindred of their foster-child when he called him a latter-day Lakist. If we must needs find him kinsmen among English poets, he may take his stand as a subordinate in the school of Gray[1] or the

[1] I am here reminded to ask in passing how Mr. Arnold, who says of Gray that he never used the popular metre of his century,

household of Cowper. With them he had some good things in common; his letters, if less worth reading than the best of theirs, have the same frank delicacy and gentle play of personal sentiment applied to the landscape or the hearthside, and couched sometimes in choice and excellent words. But Keats, of all men born the ablest to hold his own with nature, and translate her gods into verbal incarnation; Keats, who was at once the lyrist and the lyre of that nature, the priest and the altar of those gods; more than all other poets receptive and passive of her influences and forces, and more than all other poets able and active to turn them all to a divine use, to transfigure them without transformation, to attune all colours and attemper all harmonies; whose power upon these things, whose gift of transfusion and expression, places him apart from all in his sovereign command of nature, able to do for nature what in his own day Shelley could not achieve nor Wordsworth attempt; above all Greece and all Italy and all England in his own line and field of work; to push forward as a competitor with him in that especial field of work where all the giants and all the gods of art would fail to stand against him for an hour, a man who in his own craft could not use the tools that lay ready to his hand—who was nothing (it seems) if not a poet, and could not as much as prove

came to forget his admirable fragment of a didactic poem in the ten-syllable couplet; and tempted, while on this ground, to appeal against the judgment which ranks him as a poet above Collins, the man of all his age, it seems to me, who had most in him of the pure and high and durable spirit of poetry. The overture of his Ode to Liberty is worthy of Coleridge or Shelley; Gray's best ode by its side is somewhat hard and thin.

himself a poet by writing passable verse at all; this is a madness of mistake explicable and excusable only as the error of a foreign and provincial judgment. Any stanza of "Thyrsis," any fragment of "Callicles," would outweigh in point of "natural magic" all Guérin's work, even were his thoughts clothed in the beauty of verse instead of the prettiness of prose; to weigh against it the entire work of Keats, or any such single poem as the "Ode to Psyche" or that "on a Grecian Urn"—poems which for perfect apprehension and execution of all attainable in their own sphere would weigh down all the world of poetry—is inexpressibly impossible.

Sweeping aside all this accumulated panegyric, we may discern the modest attraction of Guérin's little plot of ground with its borders of crocus and snowdrop; though the gardeners have done their best to kill them with hothouse fumes and water-pipes and bell-glasses. As to his first posthumous patroness—he belongs to the breed of those suckling poets who live on patronage premature even when posthumous—I must say with another critic, "Madame Sand n'est vraiment pas heureuse en poëtes;" great and excellent as she is, their contact is not good for her. Assuredly the one aspiration of Guérin, his one desire that "a stronger soul would bow down to his weaker spirit," has since his death been somewhat too much fulfilled. A niche in the Sainte-Beuve collection is his due; but not the homage of George Sand and Matthew Arnold. His sister and he had in effect a certain distinction, they had graceful tastes and tunable minds: without distinction there cannot be genius, but there cannot be genius with nothing else; a man cannot live on air

because he cannot live without it. Mr. Arnold would set them as stars in heaven, *lucida sidera*; their little lights will hardly burn the night out, but meantime they shine well enough for children to watch them twinkle and "wonder what they are." Without a glimpse of genius, without more light or strength of spirit than many others unknown, Mlle. de Guérin shows always a beautiful and admirable soul; her diary and her letters have more than usual of the lovely and loving qualities of good women, true sisters and gentle wives, faithful and fervent and worthy to receive again the lavish love they give; they never would come forward, they need never be thrust forward, as genius or as saint. The immortal women in either kind—St. Theresa, St. Catherine, Vittoria Colonna, Mrs. Browning, Miss Christina Rossetti—belong to a different world and scheme of things. With one verse or one word of theirs any one of these could have absorbed and consumed her as a sunbeam of the fiery heaven a dewdrop of the dawning earth.[1] Nor, to repass for an instant from the personal to the religious question started from this cover by Mr. Arnold, is it just or rational to oppose to her delicate provincial piety the coarsest and ugliest form of

[1] If you would see the note of distinction between religious genius and religious talent, compare with any of Mlle. de Guérin's idyllic effusions of gracious piety, fresh and sweet in their small way as the dusk and the dew, the great new-year hymn of Miss Rossetti,

"Passing away, saith the world, passing away,"

so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second; a hymn touched as with the fire and bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords and cadences of refluent sea-music beyond reach of harp and organ, large echoes of the serene and sonorous tides of heaven.

English faith. There are graceful as well as loathsome forms of Protestantism, loathsome as well as graceful forms of Catholicism: probably the balance is about even. The Christ of Clapham is an ungracious god enough; the time is not fruitful of gods in any degree adorable; but the Christ of Montrouge? Exeter Hall is not a wise or lovely oracle; but what of Saint-Acheul? Is there any more of grace, of light, of culture or sweetness, under the banner of M. Veuillot than on the staff of the *Record?* There lies the question; not between Languedoc and Margate. Against the best of one creed it is but fair to set the best of another, against the worst the worst. As to culture, sanity, power of grasp and reception, Mlle. de Guérin hesitating at the brink of Hugo is assuredly as pitiable as any Puritan shuddering on the verge of Shakespeare.

Again, Mr. Arnold has a fond faith in the French Academy and in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* which is nothing short of pathetic; he seems actually to take them at their own valuation. The too outspoken critic before cited ventures to express in ribald phrase his wonder that such a pair of "hoarse and haggard old temptresses" (*vieilles tentatrices hâves et rauques*) should play the part of Delilah to the scourger of Philistines. Not, as he adds, that he would impugn the venerable maiden reputation of their hoary hairs; but such as they are, "ces étranges séductrices ont failli couper de leurs ciseaux émoussés les cheveux au Samson anglais. Déjà son engouement a manqué l'aveugler. Aux yeux de M. Arnold, l'amour a refait à l'Académie une virginité; il est tout prêt à épouser sa Marion, à prôner ses quelques

appas émérites, à faire courber toutes les têtes anglaises devant cette Dulcinée à quarante. Il est l'amant fougueux du bon sens, l'apôtre échauffé de la froide raison, l'avocat furibond du goût sain." This is not a fair or clear judgment; it is indigested and violent and deformed in expression; but it shows as in a cracked and blurred mirror the reflection thrown upon other minds by Mr. Arnold's act of homage in the outer courts of the Philistine temple: for thither he has unwittingly turned, and there has bent his knee, as no Frenchman could have done who was not a Philistine born and baptised and branded to the bone with the signet of the sons of Dagon. We may grant that the real office of an Academy should be—what the nominal office of this Academy is—culture and perfection of intelligence, elevation of the general standard of work, the average of mind and taste and sense which precludes absurdity or aberration and ensures something of care and conscience among the craftsmen of literature. Greater work an ideal Academy could hardly undertake, for greater work would require the vivid and personal advent of genius; and that, I presume, it could hardly undertake to supply. But has the actual Academy done this? Whom has it controlled, whom has it impelled, who but for such influence would either have gone wrong or failed to go right? whom at least among men really memorable and precious? Has it constantly done homage to the best? has it constantly rejected or rebuked the worst? Is it to the Academy that we owe the sound judgment, taste, temperance of the French prose classics whom Mr. Arnold eloquently extols? Did not the great Richelieu, its founder, set in motion

the still virgin machinery of his engine against the greater Corneille? What was Molière in its eyes? and what was not Boileau? Where now are its great men, in an age for France so fruitful of literary greatness? Does it include one of high and fine genius besides Mérimée? and do the rest of the sacred forty respect in him the official antiquary or the faultless writer on whose dawn Goethe looked out and prophesied overmuch? There are names indeed still greater on its roll, but you do not see appended to them the academic title. Once for all, waiving its mere theories and reserving its mere pretensions, let us inquire if in effect it now does, if it ever has done, if it ever will do, any real and good service whatever to pure literature? The advice which Mr. Arnold gives by implication to his English audience while preaching on the text of academies is precious and necessary in itself, if the mass of English literature now current or floating is ever to be in any measure elevated or purified; but the selection of text is merely fantastic, the process of deduction vicious and baseless. This double impression was made on me by the lecture when I heard it delivered at Oxford; I have read it since more than once, and the impression is strengthened and deepened. It is possible to start from some incongruous or ignorant assumption and yet proceed to speak words of truth and soberness; the sermon may be useful and noble though the text be strained and misapplied. For the *Revue des Deux Mondes* I have as earnest a respect as Mr. Arnold; so far from regarding it with the eyes of irreverence and ribaldry, as an old lady of pleasure, a Delilah of dangerously gay repute, the ideas

of pleasure or gaiety are the last I should associate with a name so justly venerated, a fame so sound and round and solid. Rather would I regard it, as the author of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" used to regard virtue in the days which found him unambitious of academic eminence, with such eyes as turn towards a fond and watchful grandmother. It is dangerous to ruffle the robe of that dowager. But I cannot regard her bosom as a safe pillow for the yet unshorn head of a Nazarite champion. Too many of the uncircumcised Philistines lie in wait for him slumbering in the lap of M. Buloz. Are there not giants among them, and the sons of the old giant, all of them children of uncircumcision? and the least of these has twice the thews and seven times the wits of the heavy-headed horny-eyed English Philistine. Some of them there are that sleep with their father Goliath, and some abide to this day; and the acts of them past and present, and all that they did, and their might, are they not written in the books of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*? There is M. Gustave Planche, the staff of whose spear was so very like a weaver's beam; there is M. Armand de Pontmartin, a man of great moral stature, having on every hand six fingers to fight with, if haply he may give the flesh of poets to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the field; there is M. Louis Etienne, who lately laid lance in rest against me unoffending in championship of the upper powers. Since the time of Goliath it has been a holy habit and tradition with the Philistines to curse "by their gods"—which indeed seems the chief utility of those divine beings.

The comparative culture and relative urbanity of

responsible criticism—qualities due to no prescription of academic authority, but in part to natural sense and self-respect, in part to the code of habitual honour which rather impels than compels a man to avow his words and his works—these qualities, which preserve from mere contempt even the Philistines of French literature when we turn from them to their English fellow-soldiers, have I suspect blinded Mr. Arnold to the real colours under which they also serve. As yet however they have not made a prey of him; Delilah has merely woven the seven locks of the champion's head with the web and fastened it with the pin; he has but to awake out of his sleep and go away with the pin of the beam and with the web. But next time he goes to Gaza and sees there the Academy he must beware of going in unto that siren, or in the morning he may find the gates too heavy to carry off. We may trust indeed never to find him there eyeless at the mill with slaves; but it is no good sign that he should ever be blind of this eye or deaf of that ear—blind to infirmities on this side, or deaf to harmonies on that. I write not as a disciple of the dishevelled school, "romantique à tous crins;" all such false and foolish catchwords as the names of classic and romantic I repudiate as senseless, and revere form or harmony as the high one law of all art. It is because, both as poet and critic, Mr. Arnold has done the service he has in the front rank of an army which finds among us few enough of able recruits, that I grudge in him the least appearance of praise or dispraise unworthy of his rank and office. Otherwise he would be as welcome for me as another Englishman to deny the power and variety, the supple sweetness and the superb resources of French verse in its depths and heights of song;

as welcome to ignore the higher and enhance the minor merits of a foreign literature; to mistake for the causes the effects of these minor merits, which in their turn become (as in this case of the Academy) causes of grave error and defect, weakening where they should strengthen the hands and eyes they have in training. But in a child and champion of the light the least obliquity or obscurity of vision is to be noted as dangerous. If to any one these seem things of minor moment, to a poet such as he is they cannot; to him they must be more serious than to another. We owe him too much to keep silence here, though we might allow as harmless such graceful errors of pastime or paradox as the faith in Oxford which will not allow that she has ever "given herself to the Philistines;" the beauty of the valley of Sorek has surely blinded him to the nation and nature of the Gazites and Ascalonites who have dwelt there now and again as surely as have many of their betters. Both here and in the Academy there may be a profession, a tradition of culture, of sweetness, urbanity, loyalty to the light; but where, we may too often have had to ask, are the things themselves? By their fruits ye shall know them; and what are these? In them both, if not of them, there may be good men and great; have such been always their leaders? or were ever such their types?

> "Not here, O Apollo!
> Are haunts meet for thee;
> But where Helicon breaks down
> In cliff to the sea."

There, and not in the academies or the market-places of the Philistines, for peace or war; there, where all airs are full of the breath and all fields of the feet of the gods;

where the sea-wind that first waved the wet hair of Venus moves now only the ripples that remember her rising limbs; where the Muses are, and their mother. There is his place, who in such a place long since found Circe feasting and heard Apollo play; there, below the upper glens and wellsprings of the Centaurs, above the scooped sea-shelves and flushing sands of the Sirens. Whatever now he say or do, he has been and will remain to us a lover and a giver of light; unwittingly, by impulse, for pure love of it; and such lead further and lighten otherwise than they know. All conscious help or guidance serves us less than unconscious leadership. In his best words there is often a craft and a charm; but in his best work there is always rest, and air, and a high relief; it satisfies, enlarges, refreshes with its cool full breath and serenity. On some men's nerves the temperature strikes somewhat cold; there are lungs that cannot breathe but in the air of a hothouse or a hospital. There is not much indeed of heat or flame in the Vestal or lunar light that shines from this hearth; but it does not burn down. His poetry is a pure temple, a white flower of marble, unfretted without by intricate and grotesque traceries, unvexed within by fumes of shaken censers or intoning of hoarse choristers; large and clear and cool, with many chapels in it and outer courts, full of quiet and of music. In the plainest air played here there is a sound of sincerity and skill; as in one little *Requiescat*, which without show of beauty or any thought or fancy leaves long upon the ear an impressure of simple, of earnest, of weary melody, wound up into a sense of rest. We do not always want to bathe our spirit in overflowing waters or flaming fires of

imagination ; pathos and passion and aspiration and desire are not the only springs we seek for song. Sorrows and joys of thought or sense meet us here in white raiment and wearing maiden crowns. In each court or chapel there is a fresh fragrance of early mountain flowers which bring with them the wind and the sun and a sense of space and growth, all of them born in high places, washed and waved by upper airs and rains. Into each alike there falls on us as we turn a conscience of calm beauty, of cool and noble repose, of majestic work under melodious and lofty laws ; we feel and accept the quiet sovereignties of happy harmony and loyal form, whose service for the artist is perfect freedom : it is good for us to be here. Nor are all these either of modern structure or of Greek ; here is an Asiatic court, a Scandinavian there. And everywhere is the one ruling and royal quality of classic work, an assured and equal excellence of touch. Whether for Balder dead and the weeping gods in Asgard, or for the thought-sick heart-sore king of a weary land far east, blinded and vexed in spirit with the piteous pains and wrongs of other men, the same good care and wise charm of right words are used to give speed of wing and sureness of foot to the ministering verse. The stormy northern world of water and air and iron and snow, the mystic oppression of eastern light and cruel colour in fiery continents and cities full of sickness and splendour and troubled tyrannies, alike yield up to him their spirit and their secret, to be rendered again in just and full expression. These are the trophies of his work and the gifts of his hand ; through these and such as these things, his high and distinct seat is assured to him among English poets.

NOTES ON THE TEXT OF SHELLEY.

[1869.]

It is seldom that the work of a scholiast is so soon wanted as in Shelley's case it has been. The first collected edition of his works had many gaps and errors patent and palpable to any serious reader. His text is already matter for debate and comment, as though he were a classic newly unearthed. Certain passages begin to be famous as crucial subjects for emendation; and the master-singer of our modern poets shares with his own masters and models the least enviable proof of fame—that given by corrupt readings and diverse commentaries. Awaiting the appearance, now long looked for, of a surer and carefuller text, I have but a word to say in passing, a hand to lend in this humble service of verbal emendation. One poet only of late times, and that but once, has suffered more than Shelley from the negligence and dullness of those to whose hands the trust of his text was committed. The last relics of Landor came before us distorted and deformed in every page by this shameful neglect; and the value is thus impaired of some among the most precious and wonderful examples extant of great genius untouched by great age, full of the grace, the

strength, the clear light and harmony of noon unclouded by the night at hand.

I take at random a few of the disputed or disputable passages in the text of Shelley, keeping before me the comments (issued in *Notes and Queries* and elsewhere) of Mr. Garnett, Mr. Palgrave, Mr. Rossetti, and others. In March and April 1868, the critic last named put forth a series of short papers on proposed or required emendations of passages evidently or apparently defective or corrupt. The first is that crucial verse in the famous "Stanzas written in dejection near Naples—"

"The breath of the moist air is light."

Another reading is "earth" for "air;" which at first sight may seem better, though the "unexpanded buds" in the next line might be called things of air as well as of earth, without more of literal laxity or inaccuracy than Shelley allows himself elsewhere. As to the question whether "light" (adjective) be legitimate as a rhyme to "light" (substantive), it may be at once dismissed. The license, if license it be, of perfection in the echo of a rhyme is forbidden only, and wrongly, by English critics. The emendation "slight" for "light" is absurd.

In the eighteenth stanza of the first part of the "Sensitive Plant" there is a line impossible to reduce to rule, but not obscure in its bearing. The plant, which could not prove by produce of any blossom the love it felt, received more of the light and odour mutually shed upon each other by its neighbour flowers than did any one among these, and thus, though powerless to show it, yet

"Loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver:"

in other words, felt more love than the flower which gave it gifts of light and odour could feel, having nothing to give back, as the others had, in return; all the more thankful and loving for the very barrenness and impotence of requital which made the gift a charity instead of an exchange. This license of implication, this inaccuracy of structure, which would include or involve a noun in its cognate verb (the words "loved more" being used as exactly equivalent to the words "felt more love"), is certainly not imitable by others, even if defensible in Shelley; but the change proposed in punctuation and construction makes the passage dissonant and tortuous, throws the sense out of keeping and the sound out of tune.

In the eighth stanza of the third part the following line seems to me right as it stands—

"Leaf after leaf, day by day—"

if the weight and fall of the sound be properly given. Mr. Rossetti would slip in the word "and;" were it there, I should rather wish to excise it.

In the twenty-second stanza of the "Adonais" I may remark that in Shelley's own Pisan edition the reading of the fourth line runs as it should, thus—

"A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."

I do not understand wherein can be the objection to the "magic mantles" of the thirteenth stanza. It is the best word, the word most wanted to convey, by one such

light and great touch as only a great workman can give, the real office and rank of the divine "shepherds," to distinguish Apollo from the run of Admetus's herdsmen. The reading "tragic" would be by comparison insignificant, even were there any ground of proof or likelihood to sustain it. In the fourth stanza of this poem Shelley calls Milton "the third among the sons of light." It has been asked who were the two first: it has been objected that there were at least three—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare. I should be slow to doubt that Shelley had in view the first and the last names only. To him Dante could scarcely have seemed a type of spiritual illumination, a son of light elect above other poets; of this we might be sure without the evidence we have. No man, not even Landor, has laid upon the shrine of Dante a thank-offering of more delicate and passionate praise, has set a deeper brand of abhorrence upon the religion which stained his genius. Compare the twenty-second of Shelley's collected letters with the "Pentameron" of Landor—who has surely said enough, and said it with all the matchless force and charm of his most pure and perfect eloquence, in honour of Dante, to weigh against the bitterness of his blame. Had I the right or the strength to defend the name of one great man from the charge of another, to vindicate with all reverence the fame of Landor even against the verdict of Mazzini, I would appeal to all fellow-students whether Landor has indeed spoken as one "infirm in mind" or tainted with injustice—as one slow of speech or dull of sense to appreciate the divine qualities of the founder of all modern poetry. He has exalted his name above wellnigh every

name on record, in the very work which taxes him with the infection of a ferocity caught from contact with the plague-sores of religion. It is now hoped and suggested that a spirit and a sense wholly unlike their outer habit may underlie the written words of Dante and of Milton.[1] That may be; but the outer habit remains, the most hateful creed in all history; uglier than the faith of Moloch or of Kali, by the hideous mansuetude, the devilish loving-kindness of its elections and damnations. Herein perhaps only do these two great poets fall below the greater, below Homer and Æschylus, Sophocles and Shakespeare; the very skirts of whose thought, the very hems of whose garments, are clean from the pollution of this pestilence. Their words as well as their meanings, their sound not less than their sense, we can accept as wise and sweet, fruitful and fresh to all time; but the others have assumed the accent with the raiment of Dominic and Calvin—mighty men too, it may be, after their kind; but surely rather sons of fire than sons of light. At the same time it may be plausibly if not reasonably alleged that Shelley and Landor were both in some measure disqualified by their exquisite Hellenism of spirit to relish duly the tone and savour of Dante's imagination.

There are at least two passages in the "Ode to Liberty"

[1] Of the poet of the English commonwealth Shelley has elsewhere said, "The sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion;" a passage which may serve as comment on this of the "Adonais." On the other hand, Shelley in the "Defence of Poetry" does certainly place Dante, "the second epic poet," between Homer and Milton; and so far he would seem to be referred to here also as second "among the sons of light." But where then is Shakespeare, who surely had the most "light" in him of all?

where either the meaning or the reading is dubious and debateable. In the thirteenth stanza, having described, under the splendid symbol of a summons sent from Vesuvius to Etna across the volcanic islets of Stromboli (the "Æolian isles" of old), how Spain calls England, by example of revolution, to rivalry of resurrection (in 1820, be it observed), the poet bids the two nations, "twins of a single destiny," appeal to the years to come. So far all is plain sailing. Then we run upon what seems a sudden shoal or hidden reef. What does this mean?

> "Impress us from a seal,
> All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal."

The construction is at once loose and intricate; the sentence indeed limps on both feet; but I am not sure that here is not rather oversight than corruption. The sense at starting is clearly—"Impress us *with* all ye have thought or done, *which* time cannot dare conceal;" or, "Let all ye have thought and done impress us," and so forth. The construction runs wild and falls to pieces; we found and we must leave it patchwork; for no violence of alteration, were such permissible, could force it into coherence. When Shelley's grammar slips or trips, as it seems to do at times, the fault is a fault of hasty laxity, not of ignorance, of error, of defective sense or taste such as Byron's; venial at worst, not mortal.

We start our next question in the fifteenth stanza. Whose or what is "the impious name" so long and so closely veiled under the discreet and suggestive decency of asterisks? It was at once assumed and alleged to be the name of which Shelley had already said, through the

lips of Prometheus, that "it had become a curse:" the name of Christ.[1] I for one could hardly bring myself to doubt that the reviewer of the moment had read aright. No other word indeed will give so adequate a sense, fit in so fairly with the context. It should surely be a creed, a form of faith, upon which the writer here sets his foot. What otherwise shall we take to be "the snaky knot of this foul gordian word"—a word which, "weak itself as stubble," serves yet the turn of tyrants to bind together the rods and axes of their rule? If this does not mean a faith of some kind, and a living faith to this day, then it would seem at first sight that words have no meaning—that the whole divine fabric of that intense and majestic stanza crumbles into sparkling dust, dissolves into sonorous jargon. Any such vaguer substitute as "priest" or "king"

[1] When this passage was written I was of course not ignorant that in an extant manuscript of this poem Shelley had himself filled up the gap with the word "king;" but this certainly did not appear to me a sufficient assurance that such could have been the original reading, aware as I was of the excisions and alterations to which Shelley was compelled by stress of friends or publishers to submit his yet unpublished or half-published poems. I am now, however, all but convinced that the antithesis intended was between the "king" of this stanza and the "priest" of the next; though I still think that the force and significance of the phrase are grievously impaired if we are to assume that the "foul gordian word" is simply the title of king, and not (as so much of the context would appear to imply) a creed or system of religion which might at the time have appeared to the writer wholly or mainly pernicious. And this, with all his reverence for the divine humanity of Christ, we know that the creed of historical Christianity did always appear to Shelley. In this adoration of the personal Jesus, combined as it was with an equal abhorrence of Christian theology, it is now perhaps superfluous to remark how thoroughly Shelley was at one with Blake—the only poet or thinker then alive with whom he had so much in common.

weakens not one verse only, but makes the rest comparatively feeble and pointless, even if it can be said to leave them any meaning at all ; and why any such word should be struck out upon revision of the text by any fool or coward who might so dare, none surely can guess ; for such words recur at every turn as terms of reproach. Then comes the question whether Shelley in 1820 would have used so bitter and violent a phrase to express his horror and hatred of the evil wrought in the world by the working of the Christian religion. It may help us to decide if we take into account with how terrible and memorable a name he had already branded it in the eighth stanza of this very poem. That he did to the last regard it as by all historical evidence the invariable accomplice of tyranny—as at once the constant shield and the ready spear of force and of fraud—his latest letters show as clearly as that he did no injustice to "the sublime human character" of its founder. The word "Christ," if received as the true reading, would stand merely as equivalent to the word "Christianity ;" the blow aimed at the creed would imply nothing of insult or outrage to the person. Next year indeed Shelley wrote that famous chorus in the "Hellas" which hails the rising of "the folding star of Bethlehem," as with angelic salutation, in sweeter and more splendid words than ever fell from any Christian lyrist. But when that chorus was written Shelley had not changed or softened his views of history and theology. His defence of Grecian cross against Turkish crescent did not imply that he took for a symbol of liberty the ensign of the Christian faith, the banner of Constantine and of Torquemada, under which had fought and conquered such

recruits, and with such arms, as the "paramour"[1] of Dante's Church, who begot on the body of that bride no less hopeful and helpful an offspring than the Holy Inquisition. Such workings of the creed, such developments of the faith, were before Shelley's eyes when he wrote; he had also about him the reek of as foul an incense going up from the priests of that day to their Ferdinand or their George as those of ours have ever sent up to Bonaparte or to Bourbon of their own, mixing with the smell of battle-smoke and blood the more fetid fumes of prayer and praise; and wide as is the gap between his first and his last manner, great as is the leap from "Queen Mab" to "Hellas," the passage of five years had not transformed or worn out the "philanthropist, democrat, and atheist" of 1816. For thus he signed himself in the Swiss album, not merely as ἄθεος; and the cause or provocation is clear enough; for on the same leaf there appears just above his signature an entry by some one who saw fit here to give vent to an outbreak of overflowing foolery, flagrant and fervid with the godly grease and rancid religion of a conventicle; some folly about the Alps, God, glory, beneficence, witness of nature to this or that divine thing or person, and such-like matter. A little below is the name of Shelley, with this verse attached :—

"εἰμὶ φιλάνθρωπος δημωκράτικός τ' ἄθεός τε."

I copy the spelling with all due regret and horror, but not without rejoicing on his account that Shelley was clear of Eton when he committed this verse, and had

[1] "L'amoroso drudo
Della fede cristiana." *Paradiso*, XII. 55.

now for critic or commentator a Gifford only in place of a Keate.[1] The remarks on this entry added by Christian pilgrims who came after are, in the phrase of the archetypal Pecksniff, "very soothing." One of these, I think, observes, with a pleasant pungency of originality, that the fool hath said in his heart—we have seen what.

Most of the emendations or solutions offered by Mr. Rossetti of corrupt or obscure passages in the "Revolt of Islam" seem to me probable and sound; but in this verse—

> "Gestures and looks, *such as in whirlwinds bore*,
> Which might not be withstood"—

I take the verb to be used in the absolute not the active sense—"bore onward or forward;" this use of the word here is a somewhat ungraceful sign of haste, but makes clear a passage otherwise impracticably dense and chaotic. Before passing from this poem, I have to express a hope that a final edition of Shelley's works will some day, rather sooner than later, restore to it the proper title and the genuine text. Every change made in it was forced upon the author by pressure from without; and every change is for the worse. Has no reader ever asked himself what can be the meaning of the second title? What is the revolt of Islam? Islam is not put forward as the sole creed of

[1] A reference to the Eton Lists has shown me the truth of what I had long suspected, that the school-days of Shelley must have ended before the beginning of Dr. Keate's reign as Head Master. In effect, I find that Shelley, then a fifth form boy, left in 1808, and that the Head Mastership of Dr. Keate began in 1809. The jocularities, therefore, of Mr. Hogg as to the mutual relations of Shelley and the "Old Boy" prove to be like most of his other jests—as baseless as they are pointless.

the tyrants and slaves who play their parts here with such frank ferocity; Persian and Indian, Christian and Mahometan mythologies are massed together for attack. And certainly Islam is not, as the rules of language would imply, the creed of the insurgents.[1] Could the phrase "revolt of the Christians" be taken to signify a revolt against the Christians? There is at least meaning in the first title—"Laon and Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City." Readers may prefer a text which makes hero and heroine strangers in blood, but the fact remains that Shelley saw fit to make them brother and sister, and to defend their union as essentially innocent even if socially condemnable. The letters printed in the "Shelley Memorials" show with what staunch resolution he clung to this point, when beaten upon by remonstrance from all sides. This most singular of his social and ethical heresies was indeed never quite thrown over. "Incest," he wrote in 1819 to Mrs. Gisborne, with reference to Calderon's tragic treatment of the story of Amnon and Tamar, "is, like many other incorrect things, a very poetical circumstance. It may be the excess of love or hate. It may be the defiance of everything for the sake of another, which clothes itself in the glory of the highest heroism; or it may be that cynical rage which,

[1] It may be objected that the creed from which the insurgent population has been delivered by the preaching of Laon and Cythna was that of Islam, and that the word is here used to express not the doctrine itself, but the mass of men or nations reared in the belief or tradition of that doctrine. This use may doubtless be permissible, and does afford a reasonable sense to the later title of the poem; but the original title as well as the original text still seems to me preferable.

confounding the good and bad in existing opinions, breaks through them for the purpose of rioting in selfishness and antipathy;" the one he had painted in "Laon and Cythna," the other in the "Cenci." And in that absurd abortion of a book which would discredit any man's boyhood, not to speak of Shelley's—"St. Irvyne, or the Rosicrucian"—the unfledged and half-hatched bird of paradise had uttered a weak note to the same tune. The only thing our memory carries away after that rubbish has been handled and sifted is the proof given in one passage that Shelley felt thus early some attraction to this subject; which is indeed suggestive and fruitful enough of possible tragic effect. It is noticeable that he has never cited or referred to the magnificent masterpiece of Ford's genius. Those who please may deplore or may applaud this proclivity; but the student must at any rate accept and take account of it, for the influence permeates much of Shelley's verse with a thin but clear undercurrent of feeling and allusion. The rarity of the cancelled edition of "Laon and Cythna" has been exaggerated by fraudulent or ignorant assertions. Besides my own copy, I have known of others enough at least to refute the fiction that there are but three in the world. I give but one proof among many of the injury done to the poem by minor changes of reading. In the thirtieth stanza of the twelfth canto we now read,

> "Therefore ye shall behold
> How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die;"

where the languid tautology of this verse impairs the force of a noble passage; the genuine reading is this:

"Therefore ye shall behold
How Atheists and Republicans can die." [1]

Such throughout was the process by which the more outspoken verses of a poem outspoken enough throughout were weakened and disfigured. Remembering by what forcible extortion of assent a reluctant admission of these changes was wrung from the poet, we must hope now to have back his own fresher and clearer words in their first fullness and freedom.

The passage cited from "Alastor" is, I believe, corrupt, but I cannot accept the critic's proposed change of punctuation. Here are the words disputed :—

"On every side now rose
Rocks which in unimaginable forms
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine disclosed above
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs, and yawning streams," &c.

Mr. Rossetti in evident desperation would rearrange the last lines thus :—

"And—its precipice
Obscuring—the ravine disclosed above," &c.

"*i.e.*" (he adds), "the rocks, obscuring the precipice (the precipitous descent) of the ravine, disclosed said ravine overhead."

This I must say is intolerable, and impossible. If the words could be wrenched and racked into such a meaning,

[1] This reading among others has been restored by Mr. Rossetti in the only critical edition of Shelley which has yet been given to the world ; and the gain in every such instance is so manifest that we are more than ever impelled to demand a full and final restoration of the complete and uncorrupted text as it came from the hands of the author.

we should have here from one of the mightiest masters of language the most monstrous example on record of verbal deformity, of distorted and convulsed inversion or perversion of words. I suspect the word "its" to be wrong, and either a blind slip of the pen or a printer's error. If it is not, and we are to assume that there is any break in the sentence, the parenthesis must surely extend thus far—"its precipice obscuring the ravine"—*i.e.*, the rocks opened or "disclosed" where the precipice above the ravine obscured it. But I take "disclosed" to be the participle; "its precipice darkened the ravine (which was) disclosed above." Then the sentence is left hanging loose and ragged, short by a line at least, and never wound up to any end at all. Such a sentence we too certainly find once at least in the "Prometheus Unbound" (II. 4):—

> "Who made that sense which, when the winds of spring
> In rarest visitation, or the voice
> Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
> (*A line wanting*)
> Fills the faint eyes with falling tears?" &c.

It is waste of time to attempt any patching or furbishing of this passage by excision or substitution. Perhaps the author never observed what a gap was left in sense and grammar. As it is, we can only note the omission or oversight and pass on; unless we should please or dare to slip in by way of complement some verse of our own devising; which happily no one has done or is like to do.

The "Prometheus Unbound" has this among other and better things in common with its Æschylean models, that we want now and then a scholiast for interpreter, having at times to read it as we might read for instance

the "Suppliants," and lacking a critic to "cure the halt and maimed," as Mr. Browning says of that glorious and hapless poem whose godlike grace and heroic beauty so many readers have more or less passed over with half a recognition, for no fault but its misfortune. I shall touch but on one or two points of dispute in the text as we find it; and first on this (II. 4):—

> "Till marble grew divine,
> And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
> Reflected in their race, behold, and perish."

The simplest explanation here possible is, I believe, the right. Women with child gazing on statues (say on the Venus of Melos) bring forth children like them—children whose features reflect the passion of the gaze and perfection of the sculptured beauty; men, seeing, are consumed with love; "perish" meaning simply "deperire;" compare Virgil's well-worn version, "Ut vidi, ut perii." I do not think there is any hint of contrast between transient flesh and immortal marble.

In another passage Mr. Rossetti, with the touch of true and keen criticism, has given us at least a reasonable reading in place of one barely explicable. As the text has hitherto stood, Prometheus says to the Earth-Spirit (I. 1),

> "I only know that thou art moving near
> And love. How cursed I him?"

This I always assumed to mean merely—"That thou art moving near, and dost love (me)," finding elsewhere such laxities of remiss writing or printing as that of "love" for "lovest;"[1] nor am I now sure that this was

[1] Landor has noted one instance of this error. Having set a mark against Milton's use of "empowered" for "empoweredst,"

not meant, for the "scorn" of Earth and her sons for Prometheus, of which he has lately complained, is not even in his eyes real; he says only that to refuse his request looks as though they scorned their saviour. But this new reading shows keen critical power and a quick-eyed ingenuity;

> "And *Jove*—how cursed I him?"

though it may be objected that the sentence preceding comes to an abrupt and feeble close with the close of the verse; and this I think is conclusive proof that the suggestion, however ingenious, must be decisively rejected. No conjectural emendation of a great poet's text is admissible which corrects a loose or faulty phrase by the substitution of one more accurate, but also more feeble and prosaic. When in the same act the Furies are described as

> "Blackening the air of night with countless wings,
> And hollow underneath like death,"

the critic would take the word "hollow" as an epithet of

'cast" for "castedst," he adds, "I find the same fault, where I am as much surprised to find it, in Shelley:

> '*Thou* lovest, but ne'er *knew* love's sad satiety.'"

While at work on the text of Milton, he has given us a rule which all editors and commentators would be wise to lay to heart in Shelley's case: "It is safer and more reverential to correct the punctuation of a great poet than his slightest word." Mr. Palgrave's proposal of "sea-girt" for "sun-girt city" ("Lines written among the Euganean Hills") may look plausible, but the new epithet is feeble, inadequate, inaccurate. Venice is not a sea-girt city; it is interlaced and interwoven with sea, but not girdled; pierced through with water, but not ringed about. Seen by noon from the Euganean heights, clothed as with the very and visible glory of Italy, it might seem to Shelley a city girdled with the sunlight, as some Nereid with the arms of the sun-god.

the wings, "with wings countless and hollow;" wrongly, as I think. These Furies of Shelley are "phantasms," hollow and shadowy emanations of "the all-miscreative brain:" *quædam simulacra modis pallentia miris.*

The difficult passage at the end of the third act I can only explain by some such paraphrase as this: "the thrones, altars, and prisons of the past were now like those barbaric and monumental figures carved or engraved on obelisks, which survive the decay of later structures raised by their conquerors, tombs and prisons built by kings of a dynasty more recent than the race which had reared *them*; these they see mouldering round them, built since their date in honour of the religion and the pride of past kings and priests, and are themselves now merely looked on as wonders;" thus only, and awkwardly, can I make anything of the involved and long-drawn sentence, unless with Mr. Rossetti we put a full period after the words "mouldering round," and start afresh in this fashion; "those monuments imaged (*i.e.*, *did* image; but I take *imaged* to be the participle) a dark faith, to the satisfaction and pride of kings and priests . . . and are now but an astonishment." This again seems to me inadmissible: I fear the passage must be left more or less in confusion, the parenthesis being so long between the two main verbs which prop the sentence ("which look forth . . . and are now," &c.); but in fact these large and stately structures of massive and majestic verse do seem too often to need more help of clamps and girders, if the main stones and joists of the fabric are to hold together.

At the close of that transcendant interlude of antiphonal music in the fourth act, the Earth takes up and

gives back the last notes of the Moon's chant before resuming a graver and deeper strain :

(" When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow.

THE EARTH.

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.")

Mr. Rossetti would add these two last short lines to the song of the Moon, and make the Earth's part begin at the words " O gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight," &c. : to me there has always seemed to be a sweet and subtle miracle of music in the text as it stands ; but how much of this effect may be the mere impression of habit and fancy, the mere fruit of the fondness of years for these verses as I have always known them, I cannot of course judge ; though of course, too, I incline to take the verdict of my own delight in them.[1]

It may be worth notice that the earliest editions of Shelley's poems are sometimes accurate in small points where all others have gone wrong ; for example, the first line of the speech closing the " Prometheus " runs rightly thus in the first edition :—

" This is the day, which down the void abysm,"

while from every later copy in the collected works the

[1] Here again I must make some partial recantation of the judgment given in my text. Exquisite as would be the echo of the parting song of the Moon given back by the deeper tone of the music of the Earth, I think now that the fantastic beauty of that single repercussive note would perhaps be out of tune with the supreme and equable harmony of the whole ; and there seems full reason to attribute this probable misprint to a misreading of the interpolation of these two lines in the manuscript of Shelley.

word "is" has dropped off. So in the "Cenci" (II. 1) the Livornese edition of 1819 reads :—

> "Then it was I whose inarticulate words
> Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
> Fled from your presence," &c.

The later copies drop the word *and*, thus breaking down the metre. But this genuine edition reads (IV. 4) with the later text—

> "Guilty! who dares talk of guilt? My lord," &c.,

giving no authority for the insertion of "to" before "talk," which indeed rather weakens the force of emphasis in this sudden outbreak of passionate protest. But in the speech of Marzio (V. 2) it again brings us right :—

> "Oh, dart
> The terrible resentment of those eyes
> On the dead earth!"

In the "Works" we find *dread* printed in place of *dead*, which Mr. Rossetti knew by instinct for the right reading. Again, at the end of the third act, Shelley's Italian edition runs thus :—

> "ORSINO.
> When next we meet—
>
> GIACOMO.
> May all be done— and all
> Forgotten; Oh, that I had never been!"

Surely a better than the current version—

> "ORSINO.
> When next we meet may all be done!
>
> GIACOMO.
> And all
> Forgotten," &c.

The first English edition alone reads (I. 1)—

"Respited me from hell! So may the devil," &c.

All others, from the Livornese onward, have let fall the word *me*. These slight things, so tedious to dwell upon, all help us—and they only can help us—towards a true text of our greatest modern poet. In the case of Æschylus or of Shakespeare, such light crumbs and dry husks would be held precious as grains of gold. I have but a few more to glean and reserve or reject as they seem worth.

I would certainly not agree to alter without authority that admirable verse in the fragment on Leonardo's "Medusa;"

"Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;"

the intense effect of sound and accent is too rare a thing to lose or change. To shift the stress of a verse and elongate an elided syllable must prove either a triumph of musical instinct or a dissonant and hateful failure. Here the triumphant skill and subtle sense of Shelley's ear for metre give special charm to the delicate daring of his verse, which would be lost were we to read "*the* far lands," even did this not make the line otherwise immetrical. In some other cases cited by Mr. Rossetti there may be room and reason for cutting out or slipping in a syllable or so. His corrections of text in the imperfect "Triumph of Life" seem to me worthy of all grateful acceptance: but the suggestion of "mouthless" for "monthless," in the fragment of a stanza rejected from the "Adonais," is somewhat grotesque. "Time's monthless torrent," if these were indeed Shelley's deliberate words, must mean the eternal course of time without end

or beginning, which passes without taking account as we do of years or months, days or hours. The last stanza of the "Medusa" is a mere sketch, not ripe for criticism or correction; so is the fragment of a dirge—"Rough wind, that moanest loud."

In the second line of the ninety-seventh stanza of the translated "Hymn to Mercury,"

> "Thus King Apollo loved the child of May
> In truth, and Jove *covered* them with love and joy,"

for "covered" we ought evidently to read "clothed."

In the translation of the "Cyclops," the semichorus (v. 495–502 of the Greek text) is confused and inaccurate as we now read it, and the change of "those" and "there" into "thou" is in each case a clear gain as far as the English text is concerned, though it brings us no nearer to the Greek; which runs literally thus:—

> "Happy he who shouts his song
> To the grape's dear fountain-springs,
> For a revel laid along,
> Close in arms a loved man grasping,
> And on spread couch-coverings
> Some soft woman-blossom clasping,
> Sleek, with love-locks oiled all o'er,
> *Who*, he cries, *will open me her door?*"

Shelley, working from an uncorrected text, has taken ξανθόν (the old reading for ἄνθος or κάλλος) as adjective to βόστρυχον, and has washed off from the woman's hair the sweet oil poured over the man's curls. His version, were it admissible in the eyes of more critical editors, would add grace to the charm of a most graceful strophe—that is, up to the last line, here simply misconstrued; but he has strayed again somewhat too far in his render-

ing of the semichorus antiphonal to this ; when Ulysses, hailed by the Cyclops, follows him out with the wine-skin, and the Chorus, secretly reassured and slily hopeful, sings to this ambiguous effect :—

> " Fair, with fair looks prosperous,
> Comes he from the halls inside ;
> One good friend is friends with us.
> For thy body fair the lamp
> Waits alight—come, tender bride—
> In the caverns dewy-damp :
> And thine head shall soon be bound
> Not with single-coloured garlands round."

I translate from Dindorf's text ; that given by Mr. Paley might run thus in English :—

> " There awaits thy flesh a lamp
> Of fierce fire, no tender bride," &c.

The " lamp " would then be, of course, the firebrand prepared to blind Polyphemus, and the two last lines, in the words of the editor (vol. iii. p. 509), " mean that in the place of a crown of myrtle and roses a ring of gory hue shall encircle his brows." In either case I suppose the ironic allusions to the torch of marriage and the marriage-wreath of divers colours must be the same.

There is no gap in the translation at v. 675, and the asterisks inserted after the words " Nowhere, O Cyclops," would be better away. The passage describing the cookery of Polyphemus (vv. 390–395) is difficult and debateable enough, but less hard than the desperate version of Shelley, who in his note " confesses that he does not understand this." The reading " *four* amphoræ," just above, is a misprint or slip of the pen for " ten ; " the next few words are curiously tumbled together and mis-

construed. Shelley has not distinguished the drinking-can or cup (σκύφος) wrought of ivy-wood, or carved round with ivy-leaves, from the ninety-gallon bowl (κρατὴρ) into which the Cyclops had just milked his cows. Read :—

> "Then he milked the cows,
> And, pouring in the white milk, filled a bowl
> That might have held ten amphoræ ; and by it
> He set himself an ivy-carven cup—
> Three cubits wide and four in depth it seemed—
> [And set a brass pot on the fire to boil] [1]
> And spits made out of blackthorn shoots, with tips
> Burnt hard in fire, and planed in the other parts
> Smooth with a pruning-hook ; and huge blood-bowls
> Ætnæan, set for the axe's edge to fill."

Or if σφαγεῖα can mean the axes themselves, and γνάθους be read for γνάθοις ;

> "And the under-jaws
> Of axes, huge Ætnæan slaughtering-tools."

I do not see the meaning of those asterisks marking omission where omission is none, between the opening speech of Silenus and the parode. Of this Shelley has only translated the strophe and the latter part of the epode. Why the intervening verses were omitted it is impossible to say. In default of the better version he has begrudged us I offer this by way of makeshift, following the exact order and cadence of rhymes observed by Shelley. After the call to the she-goat [2] (which he

[1] This line seems misplaced here, and has been marked as such by later editors.

[2] Shelley seems to have overlooked the sex of the goat whom the satyrs are calling back to give suck to her young. In his text the words "*he* of race divine," and "*father* of the flocks," should be altered to "she" and "mother."

translates "Get along;" it should rather be "Come," as the shout is not meant to scare, but to reclaim) the song continues—a literal goat-song for once:—

> "Ease your udders milk-distent,
> Take the young ones to the teat,
> Left in yeanlings' penfolds pent;
> Now the sleepy midday bleat
> Of your sucklings calls you home;
> Come to fold then, will you? come
> From the full-flowered pasture-grasses
> Up in Ætna's rock-strewn passes.
>
> Here no Bacchus, no dance comes
> Here, nor Mænads thyrse-bearing,
> Nor glad clang of kettledrums,
> Nor by well or running spring
> Drops of pale bright wine; nor now
> With the nymphs on Nysa's brow
> An Iacchic melody
> To the golden Aphrodite
> *Do* I lift," &c.

Read *do* for *will*, which stands in Shelley's text through mere misreading of the passage; it was doubtless wrongly pointed in the copy by which he worked.

There is another omission after verse 165, more accountable than this; whether any part of Shelley's version was struck out or not in the printing we have not been told. Perhaps the passage, essential as it is to the continuity of the scene, may be borne with in this reduced and softened form. After the verse—"I would give All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains,"—add:

> "And pitch into the brine off some white cliff,
> Having got once well drunk and cleared my brows.

How mad is he whom drinking makes not glad ![1]
For drink means strength renewed for love-making,
* * * * * *
* * * ; aye, dancing too,
Aye, and forgetfulness of ills. What then,
Shall I not buy me[2] such a drink, and bid
Fool Cyclops with his one mid eye go hang?"

In this laudable frame of mind the Falstaff of Olympus makes off on his sheep-stealing errand; and the Chorus, which hitherto has modestly stood aside and left the talking to him, now first addresses the new-comer :—

"Hear you, Ulysses, we would talk with you.

ULYSSES.

Well, on then, as you come like friends to a friend.

CHORUS.

Ye have taken Troy, and laid your hands on Helen?

ULYSSES.

And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.[3]

CHORUS.

Well, when ye had got the girl then, did ye not
All of you take your sport with her in turn,
Seeing she delights in marrying many men?
The wanton wretch!" &c.

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[1] Rabelais gives an admirable version of this line (Book iv. ch. 65) : "Veritablement, il est escript par vostre beau Euripides, et le dict Silenus, beuveur memorable ;

Furieux est, de bon sens ne jouist,
Quiconques boyt et ne s'en resjouist."

[2] Or, if we retain the reading *οὐ κυνήσομαι* instead of admitting this of *οὐκ ὠνήσομαι*,

"Shall I not worship such a drink," &c.,

for we are told to take *κυνεῖν* here in the sense of *προσκυνεῖν*, or I should render it simply,

"Shall I not kiss a drink like this?"

[3] These two lines are in Shelley's text.

After this discussion of Helen by the satyrs, Silenus returns with his plunder ; his speech begins (v. 188) "See, here are sheep," &c. Shelley, following the older editions, puts into his mouth all this last answer of the Chorus to Ulysses, with its exquisite satyric moralising on feminine levity. At the entrance of the Cyclops there is some misconstruction :—

"SILENUS.

What ho ! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance !

CYCLOPS.

What is this tumult ? "

The line given to Silenus belongs to the Cyclops as he bursts in upon the stage, and might rather be rendered :—

"Hold hard, let's see here, lend a hand : what's this ?
What sloth ? what rioting ? "

At verse 220 there is another break ; Silenus has said, "Anything you like, only don't drink *me* up ;" and the Cyclops, as delicate a monster as Caliban, replies :—

"By no means, for you'd be the death of me
Then, tumbling in my belly, with your tricks."

At verse 345, read, to fill up the gap at the end of the Cyclops' speech :—

"So creep in quick, to stand about the shrine
O' the god o' the cave and feast me fairly full."

The god of the cave is explained to be, as above,

"Myself
And this great belly, first of deities."

Half a line is missed at v. 381 :—

"Unhappy man!
How was it with you, then, faring like this?"

The next break is at v. 439; if the verses here omitted be spurious, there is no need to retain the asterisks. Anyhow they can only be given thus trimmed for translation and curtailed into decency; the satyrs, though perforce living virtuously in a state of servitude, retain their natural amativeness. Read :—

"And leave for ever
The impious Cyclops: for this long time now
Our poor dear flesh has lived a widower's life
Toward women, as we can't give *him* the slip."

At v. 585 there is a point of interrogation missed, and the dialogue has not all its original briskness and ease of motion. Here the Cyclops—now, in Trinculo's phrase, "a howling monster; a drunken monster"—shows his affection for Silenus, as Caliban in the like case shows his adoration of Stephano. The parallel would be closer if Caliban had met Falstaff, but the humour of the two scenes is much alike. It must be remembered that "the poor monster's in drink; an abominable monster!" Read :—

"No, I'll no kissing; let the Graces tempt me;
I can do well enough with Ganymede here,
Gloriously, by the Graces! where are women
Worth such sweet youths as this now?[1]

SILENUS.

Polypheme,
Am *I* Jove's Ganymede, then?

---

[1] "A most ridiculous monster! to make a wonder of a poor drunkard." (*Tempest*, ii. 2.)
But poor old Silenus is now as sober or semi-sober as Trinculo.

CYCLOPS.

Yes, by Jove !
And thus I snatch you off from Dardanus.

SILENUS.

I'm done for, boys, I'm come to fearful grief.

CHORUS.

What ! wrangle and flout your lover when he's drunk ?

SILENUS.

Alack ! I'm like to find it bitter drink."

I know that he who ventures to touch the text of Shelley should keep always before his eyes the fate of Uzza, and the curse denounced on him who adds to or takes from the sacred writings so much as a word ; if I too have laid a presumptuous hand upon the ark, tampered rashly with the inspired canon of scripture, I can only put forward the plea found in that former case unavailing, that I meant but to prop the shaken vessel, to clear the blotted records, which contain the divine treasure ; putting my trust in judges of more than Jewish or godlike tolerance. Were it for me to pass sentence, I would say of the very rashest of possible commentators that his errors, though they were many, should be forgiven, if he loved much. While revising the version of the "Cyclops" I have felt again, and more keenly, the old delight of wonder at its matchless grace of unapproachable beauty, its strength, ease, delicate simplicity and sufficiency ; the birthmark and native quality of all Shelley's translations. I have retouched nothing but one or two confused lines ; for who can hope, even though there be here and there a slip in the rendering, to supply anything as good in place of a cancelled verse of his ? What I have

ventured to retranslate in full, I never designed to supplant the text, but merely to elucidate. These small and slow labours of verbal criticism are the best returns we can make, the best tribute we can pay to a great man's work; and no man need think that a waste of his time, which so often employed the hours and the minds of Milton and of Landor. It is easier to dilate at length on the excellence of a man's genius than to sift and test it by proof of syllable and letter, that so the next student may at least find a clear and certain text to study, without the trouble of deciphering a faded palimpsest or refitting a broken puzzle. And we have especial need of accuracy and fullness of text when the text is Shelley's. His mark is burnt in more deeply and more durably upon men's minds than that of any among the great poets of his day. Of these, Coleridge and Keats set no such mark on the spirit of their readers;[1] they left simple and perfect examples of work absolutely faultless, visibly unsurpassable, self-resumed and self-content. Byron was first to stamp with his signet the thought and feeling of one kind of men; then Wordsworth in turn set his mark on a different kind. But the one for want of depth and sense and harmony, the other for want of heat and eyesight and lifeblood, and both for want of a truer force and a truer breadth of spirit, failed to impress upon all time any such abiding sign of their passage and their power, any such inevitable

[1] Coleridge's personal influence as preacher or professor of ghostly dialectics and marshlight theosophy (brighter indeed than the bedroom rushlights about it, but no star or sun) was a thing distinct from his doings as a poet. There was no more direct work done by his mere verse than by the mere verse of Keats.

and ineffaceable mark to bear witness of their work, as Dante or Milton, Goethe or Shelley, each in his special fashion.

It is no bad way of testing an opinion held vaguely but sincerely to take it up and rub it, as it were, against the opinion of some one else, who is clearly worth agreeing with or disagreeing. Mr. Arnold, with whose clear and critical spirit it is always good to come in contact, as disciple or as dissenter, has twice spoken of Shelley, each time, as I think, putting forth a brilliant error, shot through and spotted with glimpses of truth. Byron and Shelley, he says, "two members of the aristocratic class," alone in their day, strove "to apply the modern spirit" to English literature. "Aristocracies are, as such, naturally impenetrable by ideas; but their individual members have a high courage and a turn for breaking bounds; and a man of genius, who is the born child of the idea, happening to be born in the aristocratic ranks, chafes against the obstacles which prevent him from freely developing it." To the truth of this he might have cited a third witness; for of the English poets then living, three only were children of the social or political idea, strong enough to breathe and work in the air of revolution, to wrestle with change and hold fast the new liberty, to believe at all in the godhead of people or peoples, in the absolute right and want of the world, equality of justice, of work and truth and life; and these three came all out of the same rank, were all born into one social sect, men of historic blood and name, having nothing to ask of revolution, nothing (as the phrase is now) to gain by freedom, but leave to love and serve the light for the light's sake.

Landor, who died last, was eldest, and Shelley, who died first, was youngest of the three. Each stood alike apart from the rest, far unlike as each was to the other two ; not, like Coleridge, blind to the things of the time, nor, like Keats, practically alien to all things but art ; and leaving to Southey or Wordsworth the official laurels and loyalties of courtly content and satisfied compliance. Out of their rank the Georges could raise no recruits to beat the drum of prose or blow the bagpipes of verse in any royal and constitutional procession towards nuptial or funereal goal.[1]

So far we must go with Mr. Arnold ; but I cannot follow him when he adds that Byron and Shelley failed in their attempt ; that the best "literary creation" of their time, work "far more solid and complete than theirs," was due to men in whom the new spirit was dead or was unborn ; that, therefore, "their names will be greater than their writings." First, I protest against the bracketing of the two names. With all reserve of reverence for the noble genius and memory of Byron, I can no more accept him as a poet equal or even akin to Shelley on any side

[1] The one kindly attempt of Landor to fill Southey's place for him when disabled could scarcely have proved acceptable to his friend's official employers.

> "But since thou liest sick at heart
> And worn with years, some little part
> Of thy hard office let me try,
> Tho' inexpert was always I
> *To toss the litter of Westphalian swine*
> *From under human to above divine.*"—(Works, vol. ii. p. 654.)

"Call you that backing of your friends"—when they happen to be laureates?

but one, than I could imagine Shelley endowed with the various, fearless, keen-eyed, and triumphant energy which makes the greatest of Byron's works so great. With all his glory of ardour and vigour and humour, Byron was a singer who could not sing; Shelley outsang all poets on record but some two or three throughout all time; his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as divine as nature's, and not sooner exhaustible. He was alone the perfect singing-god; his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together. This between two singing-men is a distinction of some significance; and must be, until the inarticulate poets and their articulate outriders have put down singing-men altogether as unrealities, inexpedient if not afflictive in the commonwealth of M. Proudhon and Mr. Carlyle. Till the dawn of that "most desired hour, more loved and lovely than all its sisters," these unblessed generations will continue to note the difference, and take some account of it. Again, though in some sense a "child of the idea," Byron is but a foundling or bastard child; Shelley is born heir, and has it by birthright; to Byron it is a charitable nurse, to Shelley a natural mother. All the more praise, it may be said, to Byron for having seen so much as he did and served so loyally. Be it so then; but let not his imperfect and intermittent service, noble and helpful now, and now alloyed with baser temper or broken short through sloth or spite or habit, be set beside the flawless work and perfect service of Shelley. His whole heart and mind, his whole soul and strength, Byron could not give to the idea at all; neither to art, nor freedom, nor any faith whatever. His life's work therefore falls as short of the

standard of Shelley's as of Goethe's work. To compare "Cain" with "Prometheus," the "Prophecy of Dante" with the "Ode to Naples," is to compare "Manfred" with "Faust." Shelley was born a son and soldier of light, an archangel winged and weaponed for angel's work. Byron, with a noble admixture of brighter and purer blood, had in him a cross of the true Philistine breed.

There is no other word than this yet devised which will carry the exact weight of meaning wanted. The use of it is however, it seems, offensive to certain persons; one writer has actually signed his name to an article in which he asserts that Mr. Matthew Arnold and I after him use or abuse it as a reproachful synonym for the name of Christian. Anonymous fiction of this kind no man will notice who respects the truth or himself; but some exposition of the meaning of words may be permissible and serviceable for the correction of an error or the exposure of a falsehood. It is not the correction of an error that is for the minute my task. This writer, whose article was signed with the name of Peter Bayne, undertakes the defence of his gods in heaven above and on earth beneath against Mr. Arnold and myself with engines and artillery of a somewhat shaky and explosive kind. For myself, it appears that I, "who am refined" (*teste* Bayne) "in my language, and have quite the manners of a gentleman" (this I fear is the scathing expression of a pungent irony), have denounced the whole race of "Christians" at one fell swoop as "noisome Philistines;" exceeding Mr. Arnold by the addition of an epithet. I am not concerned to dispute the degrees of gentility with a falsifier of the sense of words, to question the breeding

or pass sentence on the manners of a public and self-exposed libeller. I would only remark that when the reader is led or driven off the bare highway of truth it is but fair to afford him some morsel of slander so spiced and sauced that it may perhaps slip glibly down some one's gullet without sticking, some palatable and digestible condiment of calumny, some pleasanter pasture, at least, than a twice-cooked and twice-chewed mess of thistles: for it cannot be certain that he will by some divine inborn instinct prefer that diet to any other. Mr. Bayne's calumnies are somewhat dry, a little flat and hard; Crabtree, in this revival of Sheridan's play, moves clumsily in the coarse livery of slander in undress, without the brocade and perfume of Backbite, the genial grace of Mrs. Candour, or the sinewy and flexible facility of Snake. His crude fiction wants breadth, delicacy, sureness of touch; Tartuffe would scarcely have taken him on trial as a fellow-servant with Laurent. In one point he is liker another once famous figure in the drama. The valet in Farquhar's comedy knew when people were talking of him, "they laughed so consumedly." Mr. Peter Bayne has sounded a baser string of humility than the valet. When he does but scent or suspect anywhere a contemptuous allusion, he knows "they must be talking," not of him, but of the gods of his worship. Scrub knew his own place; but Mr. Bayne knows the place of his gods; and indeed, if we judge of a deity by his worshippers, he may be right in thinking that what he adores must be naturally liable to men's contempt. He remarks, with cruelly satirical reference to my alleged heresies and audacities in the choice of guides and teachers not chosen to his mind,

that my "years and achievements make it fitting" for me "*to point the finger of scorn* at" figures enthroned in the pantheon of his moral mythology. What may be the years and what the achievements of Mr. Peter Bayne I know not; but I do know that the years of Nestor and the achievements of Napoleon would not suffice to extenuate fatuity on the one hand and false witness on the other.

A slandered man may, if he please, claim leave to take (though he may not care to make) occasion in passing to set a mark on the calumniator; but he will hardly care to take into his hands the hangman's office of applying the iron or the lash. I have done, and return without apology from mean to higher matters. Of the relation between Shelley and Byron I have here no more to say; but before ending these notes I find yet another point or so to touch upon. Perhaps to every student of any one among the greater poets there seems to be something in his work not yet recognised by other students, some secret power or beauty reserved for his research. I do not think that justice has yet been done to Shelley as to some among his peers, in all details and from every side. Mr. Arnold, in my view, misconceives and misjudges him not less when set against Keats than when bracketed with Byron. Keats has indeed a divine magic of language applied to nature; here he is unapproachable; this is his throne, and he may bid all kings of song come bow to it. But his ground is not Shelley's ground; they do not run in the same race at all. The "Ode to Autumn," among other such poems of Keats, renders nature as no man but Keats ever could. Such poems as the "Lines

written among the Euganean Hills" cannot compete with it. But do they compete with it? The poem of Keats, Mr. Arnold says, "*renders* Nature;" the poem of Shelley "*tries to render* her." It is this that I deny. What Shelley tries to do he does; and he does not try to do the same thing as Keats. The comparison is as empty and profitless as one between the sonnets of Shakespeare and the sonnets of Milton. Shelley never in his life wrote a poem of that exquisite contraction and completeness, within that round and perfect limit. This poem of the Euganean Hills is no piece of spiritual sculpture or painting after the life of natural things. I do not pretend to assign it a higher or a lower place; I say simply that its place is not the same. It is a rhapsody of thought and feeling coloured by contact with nature, but not born of the contact; and such as it is all Shelley's work is, even when most vague and vast in its elemental scope of labour and of aim. A soul as great as the world lays hold on the things of the world; on all life of plants, and beasts, and men; on all likeness of time, and death, and good things and evil. His aim is rather to render the effect of a thing than a thing itself; the soul and spirit of life rather than the living form, the growth rather than the thing grown. And herein he too is unapproachable.

Other and lesser critics than Mr. Arnold have taxed Shelley with a want of dramatic power upon the characters and passions of men. While writing these notes I have come across the way of such an one, who bids us notice how superior in truth and subtlety is Mr. Browning's study of Guido Franceschini to Shelley's of

Count Cenci. Here again a comparison is patched up between two things utterly unamenable to the same rule. The wonderful figure so cunningly drawn and coloured by Mr. Browning is a model of intense and punctilious realism.[1] Every nerve of the mind is touched by the patient scalpel, every vein and joint of the subtle and intricate spirit divided and laid bare. A close and dumb soul compelled into speech by mere struggle and stress of things labours in literal translation and accurate agony at the lips of Guido. This scientific veracity which unbuilds and rebuilds the whole structure of spirit, thought by thought and touch by touch, till the final splendour of solution is achieved, and the consummate labour made perfect from key-stone to coping-stone, is so triumphant a thing that on its own ground it can be matched by no poet; to match it we must look back to Balzac. Shelley worked by other rules to another end: with the sculptor's touch rather than the anatomist's. But his figure of Cenci is not the less accurate for its breadth of handling. We might as well consign Manon Lescaut to a place below Emma Bovary, because Prévost wrought out his immortal study with broader lines and fewer colours than Flaubert. A figure may be ideal and yet accurate, realistic and yet untrue, as a fact not thoroughly fathomed may be in effect a falsehood. There is a far stronger cross of the ideal in the realism of

[1] The word realism has a higher and a baser sense; there is the grand spiritual realism of Balzac or Browning, as well as the crude and facile realism, or vulgarism rather, of writers wanting alike in spirit and in form. It is so often used as a term of reproach on one side, on the other as a boastful watchword, that when taken as a simple term of definition it may perhaps be misconstrued.

Æschylus or Shakespeare than runs through the work of the great modern realists. What was the latent breadth or depth of Shelley's dramatic genius we cannot say, as he had not time himself to know. It is incomplete in the "Cenci;" for example, in the figure of Orsino the lines are not cut sharp and deep enough; he is drawn too easily and lightly; the picture looks thin and shadowy beside the vivid image we get from the old report of the Cenci trial. That sketch of Monsignor Guerra, the tall delicate young priest, with long curls and courtly graces, playing on crime as on a lute with fine fingers used to music-making, might have been thrown out in keen relief against the great figure of Cenci; a Caponsacchi turned ignoble instead of noble, and as well worth drawing had the hand been there to draw. As it is, he plays but a poor part, borne up only by the sweet strength of Shelley's verse. But is Cenci himself the mere and monstrous embodiment of evil made flesh, the irrational and soulless mask of lust and cruelty, that critics have called him? Is he in effect as inanimate and unreal as Guido is real and alive? To me, putting aside the difference of handling between the schools of which Shakespeare and Balzac are respectively the heads, the one seems as true as the other. Cenci, as we see him, is the full-blown flower, the accomplished result of a life absolute in its luck, in power and success and energetic enjoyment. His energy is insatiable of emotions, and has few left to make trial of; the conscience of this sharpens and exasperates the temper of his will. Something within him, born as much of the spirit as the flesh, is ravenous and restless as fire. To feel his power

by dint of hard use is a need of his nature; "his soul, which is a scourge," must needs smite to know itself alive and taste its strength: too strong for satiety or collapse, while life endures his nature must bite and burn as surely as steel must or flame. What he is, good fortune has made him—"Strength, health, and pride, and lust, and length of days." What Guido Franceschini is, he has been made by ill fortune. Fed with good things from his birth, the evil nature in him might have swollen into the likeness of Cenci's; as Cenci, crossed and cramped at every turn of life, with starved energies and shrivelled lusts, might have shrunk into the shape of Guido, a pained and thwarted spirit of self-suffering evil. The one, though drawn with less detail of growth from seed to fruit, is surely not less conceivable than the other; but Cenci's is the stronger spirit, the more solid and rounded nature: he was not one to struggle or fail. Shelley has made his ruling appetite the lust of strength, of self-conscious and spiritual power: he has not added the fleshly lust of pain and subtle animal relish of the pungent infliction, which was doubtless interfused with Cenci's sensuous cruelty. But the august and horrible figure is painted as naturally as nobly; his rage and his religion, the loathing that underlies his lust, and the lust that inflames his loathing; his hungry abhorrence of his daughter's beauty of body and soul—("Beast that thou art!")—his faith in God and fury against good, his splendid exaltation of spirit into a passionate and winged rapture of ardent hatred or of fiery joy, consummate in that last outbreak as of all the fumes and flames of hell at once, are no more alien from nature or each other

than Guido's subtle crossings and windings of soul through backstairs and byways of brute craft and baser pride, of barren anger and greed and pain. This is evidence enough that if Shelley had lived the "Cenci" would not now be the one great play written in the great manner of Shakespeare's men that our literature has seen since the time of these. The proof of power is here as sure and as clear as in Shelley's lyric work; he has shown himself, what the dramatist must needs be, as able to face the light of hell as of heaven, to handle the fires of evil as to brighten the beauties of things. This latter work indeed he preferred, and wrought at it with all the grace and force of thought and word which give to all his lyrics the light of a divine life; but his tragic truth and excellence are as certain and absolute as the sweetness and the glory of his songs. The mark of his hand, the trick of his voice, we can always recognise in their clear character and individual charm; but the range is various from the starry and heavenly heights to the tender and flowering fields of the world wherein he is god and lord: with here such a flower to gather as the spinners' song of Beatrice, and there such a heaven to ascend as the Prologue to Hellas, which the zealous love of Mr. Garnett for Shelley has opened for us to enter and possess for ever; where the pleadings of Christ and Satan alternate as the rising and setting of stars in the abyss of luminous sound and sonorous light. We have now but to await the final gift of a perfect and critical edition of the whole works, the supreme tribute of love and worship yet owing to the master singer of our modern race and age; to the poet beloved above all

other poets, being beyond all other poets—in one word, and the only proper word—divine.

NOTE.

Shortly after the publication of these slight and rapid notes, the appearance of the edition whose advent was here hopefully invoked gave a fresh impulse and opened a wider way to the study of Shelley. The ardour and labour expended on his glorious task by Mr. W. M. Rossetti must link his name for ever in honourable association with that of the poet to whom he has done such loyal and noble service. He has lightened the darkness that perplexed us at so many turns of a labyrinth which others had done their best to darken; he has delivered all students from the bondage of Medwin and Hogg: at those muddy springs no future "mental traveller" will ever need again to slake or to cheat his thirst for some dubious drop of information as to how the god of song might have appeared on earth to the shepherds or the swineherds of Admetus. He has done much more than this; he has had the glory of giving to the world fresh verse of Shelley's. Whole poems and priceless fragments, fresh instalments of imperfect but imperishable work, we owe to the labour of his love. Often too he has found means to elucidate and to rectify much that was corrupt and obscure. For all these benefits he deserves all the gratitude that can be given by lovers of Shelley whose love has borne no such fruit and done no such service as his. Outside the precincts of Grubstreet

no dullness could ignore and no malignity deny the value of the service done, the greatness of the benefits conferred. On the other hand, I am impelled, however unwillingly, to enter my protest against the general principle on which the text has been recast and rearranged. The very slightest change of reading, though it should be but a change in punctuation, ought never to be offered without necessity, as it can never be received without reluctance. To throw over for some new version, though never so rational or plausible, the text we have by heart, the words which line by line and letter by letter have grown as it were a part of ourselves, have worked their way (so to speak) into the very lifeblood of our thought, the very core and conscience of our memory, cannot but be pain and grief to any faithful and loving student. But in this revision, so far from showing any tenderness or respect for such feelings as he might have been supposed to share, Mr. Rossetti has too often handled Shelley, I will not say as Milton was handled by Bentley, but I must say as Shakespeare was handled by Steevens. The punctilious if not pedantic precision which has reformed the whole scheme of punctuation, doubtless often loose enough in the original editions, compels us to remark that the last state of this text is worse than the first. This edition is beyond praise and beyond price as a book of reference; but no one, I should imagine, will ever read in it for pleasure, while he can procure instead the loosest and most incorrect of those previously printed. Throughout the whole five acts of the "Cenci" the reader is incessantly irritated by such small but significant vexations as the substitution of "you" for "thou" or

"thee" for "you," on some rigid system of regulation to which the editor himself does not pretend to suppose that his author ever proposed to conform. Now I cannot but think that a lesser poet than Shelley might reasonably be presumed to know better than his editor what he meant to say, and by what rule or what instinct his hand was guided as he wrote. To me the tact or instinct which even in these small matters directed the hand and determined the choice of Shelley seems so nearly infaliible in its exquisite and subtle delicacy, that even if for once my own taste would have rejected the turn of a sentence or a phrase which to his taste has seemed preferable I should undoubtedly consider that he was likelier to be right than I—at least with regard to his own work. Of this readjustment of the words "you" and "thou" six instances are acknowledged and the principle of reformation is vindicated in a note; but for the sentences broken up and recast, the interpolated periods which make two or three curt inharmonious sentences out of one most harmoniously prolonged through natural pauses to its natural end—for these and other vexatious pedantries or petty rigidities of rule, it does not seem that any defence or apology has been thought needful. Yet a skilful and able student or master of language such as Mr. Rossetti cannot surely need to be told that these superfluous breaks and changes in the punctuation deform and destroy the fine perfection of the metre; that the harmony of a whole speech or a whole stanza may be shattered by the intrusion or suppression of a colon or a comma; that a false pointing in English verse is as bad as a false quantity in Latin. There is no

man living, in my mind, who might be trusted to correct the metre of Shelley; and among all past poets of his own rank I know of none who might have been so trusted but Milton. And it is no less an enterprise than this that Mr. Rossetti has taken upon himself. Surely, too, his scholarship was somewhat at fault when he likened to the English of Mrs. Gamp the use of an obsolete and doubtless a licentious construction in "Rosalind and Helen"—

> "My Lionel, who, as every strain
> Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
> Sunk—"

here altered by the excision of the word *who* and the substitution of a period for a comma, which compels us to begin a fresh sentence with the following words. Even were the original reading a mere solecism, it would be preferable to such drawing and quartering of a poet's text as this. But it is simply a revival—indefensible indeed in my eyes, and probably due to mere haste—of a lax usage permitted to elder writers both in verse and prose. If all texts are to be regulated after this pedagogic fashion, neither Shakespeare nor even Milton will be secure against correction. The poem in which this passage occurs, certainly the least precious example we have of Shelley's mature work, was, as we know, resumed and completed at the desire of Mrs. Shelley after it had been cast aside as not worth completion; and we may well suppose that the task was executed rapidly and with little of the passionate pleasure that impels and informs the execution of work into which the workman can pr-

his whole heart. A much more real and grave solecism in "Julian and Maddalo" has been left not only uncorrected but unnoticed—"One blessing which thou ne'er didst imprecate *for* on me." Even such a positive blunder as this I should not myself have presumed to correct by any process of suppression and substitution; but it is singular that an editor who has never scrupled to apply this process when he thought fit should have abstained from applying it in this really flagrant instance of bad English. Against another example of this interference I must also protest for the sake of my own and all ears that have been trained on the music of Shelley; I refer to the change made in the last verses of the overture to the "Lines written among the Euganean Hills." If the editor finds the license of such a phrase as

> "Every little living nerve
> * * * * * *
> *Are* like sapless leaflets now"

too "annoying" to be endured by a scholastic sense of propriety, the annoyance is far keener which will be inflicted on others by his substituted reading—"Is like a sapless leaflet now." Here again Shelley has indulged in a loose and obsolete construction which may or may not be defensible; I should not at the present day permit it to myself, or condone it in another; and had the editor been engaged in the revision of a schoolboy's theme, he would certainly have done right to correct such a phrase, and as certainly would not have done wrong to add such further correction as he might deem desirable; but the task here undertaken is not exactly comparable

to the revision of a schoolboy's theme. Nor are these grammatical castigations the worst examples of the singular freedom with which so true and studious an enthusiast for the fame of Shelley has thought it allowable to handle the text of his greatest poems. Under the pernicious guidance of professors and pedagogues dead and living he has been induced to dismember and disfigure such samples of lyric verse as touch the very highest top of possible perfection—songs that might have been envied by Simonides and praised by Sappho. By one of these blind (and deaf) guides he has been led to deface two stanzas of the "Skylark" after a fashion only to be paralleled, I should hope, in Bentley's Milton; to displace the pause in the second stanza so as at once to deform the meaning and destroy the music; and in the third to supplant "an *unbodied*" by "an *embodied* joy"! Even this is not the very worst of all. If there is one verse in Shelley or in English of more divine and sovereign sweetness than any other, it is that in the "Lament"—

"Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar."

The music of this line taken with its context—the melodious effect of its exquisite inequality[1]—I should have

[1] If any man of human ear can want further evidence than his own sense of harmony in support of the true and hitherto undisputed reading, he may find one instance among others of the subtle and wonderful use to which Shelley would sometimes put a seeming imperfection of this kind in the verses to Emilia Viviani:

"Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?"

Here the same ineffable effect of indefinable sweetness is produced by an exact repetition (but let no aspiring "poet-ape" ever think to reproduce it by imitation) of the same simple means—the suppression, namely, of a single syllable. And I cannot but wonder as

thought was a thing to thrill the veins and draw tears to the eyes of all men whose ears were not closed against all harmony by some denser and less removable obstruction than shut out the song of the Sirens from the hearing of the crew of Ulysses. Yet in this edition (vol. ii. p. 274) the word "autumn" is actually foisted in after the word "summer." Upon this incredible outrage I really dare not trust myself to comment. The only parallel I know to it within the memory of man is the repainting of Giotto's portrait of Dante by an Italian hireling at the bidding of his Austrian masters, who desired to efface from the poet's berretta the sacred national colours of hope and faith and love. That is irreparable; but the outrage offered to the text of Shelley happily is not. For the conception of this atrocity the editor is not responsible; for its adoption he is. A thousand years of purgatorial fire would be insufficient expiation for the criminal on whose deaf and desperate head must rest the original guilt of defacing the text of Shelley with this most damnable corruption. To such earless and soulless commentators, strong only in finger-counting and figure-casting, the ghost of their divine victim, whether Shakespeare or Shelley, might say with Paulina—

> "Do not repent these things. * * *
> * * * * A thousand knees
> Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting,

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well as rejoice that no pedant whose ears are at the ends of his fingers should ever yet have proposed to correct and complete the verse by reading

> "*Say*, is it with thy kisses," &c.

> Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
> In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
> To look that way thou wert "

At least we may be assured that no such penance, though multiplied beyond the calculation of all arithmeticians who ever made use of their science as a lead-line to sound the depths of song, as a key to unlock the secrets of harmony, could ever move the righteous judge of Marsyas to look with pity on the son of Midas who had thus abused the text of one so dear to him as Shelley. The race of his old enemy, we perceive, has degenerated since the date of the Phrygian king; the regal and paternal ears are indeed hereditary, but as surely as the touch of the father turned all things to gold, so surely the touch of his children turns all things to lead.

I shall merely notice the single remaining instance of perversion which I feel bound not to pass over in silence; the false pointing of one of the noblest passages in the "Prometheus Unbound"—

> "Heap on thy head, by virtue of this curse,
> Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good."

I should really have thought it impossible to mistake the simple and obvious meaning of these and the glorious verses which follow; namely, that the curse invoked on the almighty tyrant was to do evil and behold good. The idea is of course not original; few lines have been oftener quoted, and few have better deserved their fame, than the majestic verse in which Persius has invoked upon tyrants a deeper damnation than ever priest conceived—

> "Virtutem videant intabescantque relictâ."

What indeed, compared to this, are the gross and brutish threats of theological materialism? what is the ice or fire of Dante, the burning marl of Milton? But by the application of this supreme curse to the supreme oppressor Shelley has transfigured the noble moral thought of the Stoic poet into the splendour of an idea too sublime for the conception of one so much lesser than himself. It is utterly inexplicable to me how an editor of Mr. Rossetti's high and rare intelligence in matters of art and imagination can here for once have failed to follow the track of Shelley's thought, to see with Shelley's eyes this vision of the two infinities of good and evil; of the evil deeds wrought by omnipotence and the good deeds wrought by suffering—both of these infinite as God himself, as the world he torments, as the solitude which is at once the condition and the chastisement of his omnipotence. The sequence of ideas is so natural and logical, so coherent with the whole scheme and subject of the poem, that I cannot understand by what strange aberration the editor should have lost his way through so plain and open a tract of country, and thought it necessary to shatter at once the harmony, the sense, and the grammar of so simple and superb a passage in order to patch up an explanation as forced, unnatural, and improbable as the more obvious interpretation was clear, consistent, and sufficient. I should add that as Mr. Rossetti, with his habitual candour and generous good sense, has since published a note which may be taken as equivalent to a recantation of the error which led him to cast aside the previous text for the dissonant and incongruous version produced by a change of pointing,

I should not have given even this passing notice to the matter had the passage been less important, the perversion less flagrant, or the mistake already cancelled. I have now, to adopt a pedagogic formula which might beseem the lips of a commentator in the heat of correction, discharged a painful duty, but one which I felt to be incumbent on me; and I may add, in the same professional style and spirit, that I hope I may never be compelled to undertake it again. It should also be noted by those who may feel most keenly the indignity offered to Shelley by such perversions and corruptions of his meaning and his music as those on which I have here had to remark, that no little service has been done to the text in other places by the simple correction of many such obvious and indubitable misprints as deform the penultimate stanza of "The Revolt of Islam;" where, to take but a single instance, the words "one line" had in all previous editions been allowed to stand in defiance of sense and metre, both of which for more than half a century had been crying aloud for the restoration of the right reading —"on a line."

I have but one other fault to find with this first critical edition of Shelley; and in this instance I am confident of having with me, I had wellnigh said all lovers of his fame, but that this would exclude at least one name which must always be counted among those of his most loving disciples—that of the editor himself. To reprint in an appendix the monstrous mass of doggrel which has been pitilessly preserved by the evil fidelity of Mr. Hogg, and to add even the metrical sweepings of "St. Irvyne," is an offence on which I believe that the

verdict of all competent critics has been unanimous. That this wretched rubbish should exist at all in print is vexation enough for those to whom the honour of the greatest poets is dear; but Mr. Hogg's book is a monument likely to prove something less durable than brass, and in its mouldering pages the evidence of Shelley's boyish absurdities and atrocities in the way of rhyme might have been trusted to rot unobserved save of some rare collector of strange and worthless things. But to have them bound up with the ripest work of the first lyric poet of England, tied on as it were to the tail or pinned to the back of a volume which undertakes to give us for the first time a critical text of Shelley, is a thing not to be endured or extenuated.[1] The argument or apology of the editor on behalf of this lamentable act of caprice has not I believe made a single convert, and is I should hope not likely to make one. Those who did most justice to the zealous labour and the strenuous devotion of Mr. Rossetti, those who were the first to recognise with all gratitude what thanks were due to his ardour and ability, were the first to utter their protest

[1] An edition of Shelley which should give us a final standard of the text would naturally relegate "Queen Mab" to its proper place in an appendix. The strong and sincere protest of Shelley against the piratical reissue of this poem, backed by the frank and reasonable avowal that he was ashamed of the bad poetry contained in it, should have sufficed to exclude it from the station at the head of his works which it has so long been permitted to retain. Full of intellectual power and promise as it is, a poem repudiated by its author as unworthy of his maturer fame should never have been thrust into the place which obviously belongs to "Alastor;" for it is only with this later work that the real career of Shelley as a poet may be properly said to begin.

against this the most unhappy and perverse example on record of a pernicious exactitude in the collection and preservation of all that an author would desire to efface from his own and all men's memory. The first such protest, if I mistake not, was expressed in earnest and weighty words by Miss Mathilde Blind, whose admirable essay on Shelley was one of the earliest and most notable signs of the impulse given to the critical study of the poet by the appearance of this edition. That essay, full as it was of eloquent commentary and fervent thought, is yet more precious for its many contributions to the pure and perfect text of Shelley which we hope before long to see; no pedagogic emendations or professorial conjectures, but restorations supplied from the poet's own manuscript; and, more than all, for the completion of that faultless poem called "The Question" by one long-lost line of final loveliness.

It would be a pleasanter task than that of fault-finding or protesting, to pass once more through the glorious gallery of Shelley's works in the company of his first critical editor, and note down what points of consent or dissent might occur to us in the process of comparing opinions as to this poem or that. But time and space forbid me to do more than register my own opinion as to the respective value of two among the latest, and express the surprise which I share with Miss Blind at the station assigned by Mr. Rossetti to the "Witch of Atlas," which he deliberately ranks above the "Epipsychidion." It is indeed an exquisite exercise of sunny and flowery fancy, which probably was designed to cover or convey no such elaborate allegoric significance as the

editor seems willing to seek in it; the "lady witch" being simply an incarnation of ideal beauty and beneficence, in her relations to man a spiritual patroness of free thought and free love, in her relations to nature a mistress or an adept of her secret rites or forces. Nor does it seem to me that Mr. Rossetti has touched on the one point where the "Epipsychidion" might be plausibly represented as open to attack. Its impalpable and ethereal philosophy of love and life does not prevent it from being "quite a justifiable sort of poem to write;" the questionable element in it is the apparent introduction of such merely personal allusions as can only perplex and irritate the patience and intelligence of a loyal student, while they may not impossibly afford an opening for preposterous and even offensive interpretations. In all poetry as in all religions, mysteries must have place, but riddles should find none. The high, sweet, mystic doctrine of this poem is apprehensible enough to all who look into it with purged eyes and listen with purged ears; but the passages in which the special experience of the writer is thrust forward under the mask and muffler of allegoric rhapsody are not in any proper sense mysterious; they are simply puzzling; and art should have nothing to do with puzzles. This, and this alone, is the fault which in my opinion may be not unreasonably found with some few passages of the "Epipsychidion;" and a fault so slight and partial as merely to affect some few passages here and there, perceptible only in the byways and outskirts of the poem, can in no degree impair the divine perfection of its charm, the savour of its heavenly quality. By the depth and exaltation of its dominant

idea, by the rapture of the music and the glory of the colour which clothe with sound and splendour the subtle and luminous body of its thought, by the harmony of its most passionate notes and the humanity of its most god-like raptures, it holds a foremost place in the works of that poet who has now for two generations ruled and moulded the hearts and minds of all among his country-men to whom the love of poetry has been more than a fancy or a fashion ; who has led them by the light of his faith, by the spell of his hope, by the fire of his love, on the way of thought which he himself had followed in the track of the greatest who had gone before him—of Æschylus, of Lucretius, of Milton ; who has been more to us than ever was Byron to the youth of his own brief day, than ever was Wordsworth to the students of the day succeeding ; and of whom, whether we class him as second or as third among English poets, it must be in either case conceded that he holds the same rank in lyric as Shakespeare in dramatic poetry—supreme, and without a second of his race. I would not pit his name against the sacred name of Milton ; to wrangle for the pre-cedence of this immortal or of that can be but futile and injurious ; it is enough that our country may count among her sons two of the greatest among those great poets who have also been prophets and evangelists of personal and national, social and spiritual freedom ; but it is equally certain that of all forms or kinds of poetry the two highest are the lyric and the dramatic, and that as clearly as the first place in the one rank is held among us by Shakespeare, the first place in the other is held and will never be resigned by Shelley.

BYRON.

[Prefatory Note.—This, like the following essay, was prefixed to a small volume of selections from the poems of the author whose genius is the subject of discussion. To the work of Coleridge this process of selection, if adequately carried out, must have been, as Leigh Hunt long since suggested, a real and great service ; for his work is distinctly divisible into good and bad, durable and perishable ; and it would be a clear gain to have the priceless parts of that work detached from the worthless ; but to Byron, who rarely wrote anything either worthless or faultless, it could not be otherwise than injurious. He can only be judged or appreciated in the mass ; the greatest of his works was his whole work taken altogether ; and to know or to honour him aright he must be considered with all his imperfections and with all his glories on his head.]

The most delicate and thoughtful of English critics has charged the present generation of Englishmen with forgetfulness of Byron. It is not a light charge : and it is not ungrounded. Men born when this century was getting into its forties were baptized into another church

than his with the rites of another creed. Upon their ears, first after the cadences of elder poets, fell the faultless and fervent melodies of Tennyson. To them, chief among the past heroes of the younger century, three men appeared as predominant in poetry; Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley. Behind these were effaced, on either hand, the two great opposing figures of Byron and Wordsworth. No man under twenty can just now be expected to appreciate these. The time was when all boys and girls who paddled in rhyme and dabbled in sentiment were wont to adore the presence or the memory of Byron with foolish faces of praise. It is of little moment to him or to us that they have long since ceased to cackle and begun to hiss. They have become used to better verse and carefuller workmen; and must be forgiven if after such training they cannot at once appreciate the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: the excellence of sincerity and strength. Without these no poet can live; but few have ever had so much of them as Byron. His sincerity indeed is difficult to discover and define; but it does in effect lie at the root of all his good works: deformed by pretension and defaced by assumption, masked by folly and veiled by affectation; but perceptible after all, and priceless.

It is no part of my present office to rewrite the history of a life in which every date and event that could be given would now seem trite and stale to all possible readers. If, after so many promises and hints, something at once new and true shall at length be unearthed

or extricated, which may affect for the better or the worse our judgment of the man, it will be possible and necessary to rewrite it. Meantime this among other chances "lies on the lap of the gods;" and especially on the lap of a goddess who still treads our earth. Until she speaks, we cannot guess what she may have to say; and can only pass by with reverent or with sceptical reticence.[1]

Thus much however we may safely assert: that no man's work was ever more influenced by his character; and that no man's character was ever more influenced by his circumstances. Rather from things without than from things within him did the spirit of Byron assume colour and shape. His noblest verse leapt on a sudden

[1] It will be evident that these lines were written before the appearance of the book in which Madame de Boissy thought fit to let the world know that she had nothing to tell worth its hearing with regard to the man whose love had made her famous, but was not the less willing to put forth that nothing in two leaden volumes of verbiage. The worst consequence of this miscarriage was not the collapse of such faint hopes or surmises as we might yet have cherished of some benefit to be received in the way of biography, some new and kindly light to be thrown on the life and character of Byron; it was the opportunity given to a filthy female moralist and novelist who was not slow to avail herself of such an occasion "to expound her beastly mind to all." Evidently the laurels of Mrs. Behn had long kept her successor from sleeping; it was not enough to have copied the authoress of "Oroonoko" in the selection of a sable and a servile hero; her American imitator was bent on following her down fouler ways than this. But I feel that an apology is due to the virtuous memory of the chaste Aphra; she was indeed the first "nigger novelist," and she was likewise a vendor and purveyor of obscene fiction; but here the parallel ends; for I am not aware that she ever applied her unquestionable abilities in that unlovely line of business to the defamation at second hand of the illustrious and defenceless dead.

into life after the heaviest evils had fallen upon him which even he ever underwent. From the beginning indeed he had much to fight against; and three impediments hung about him at starting, the least of which would have weighed down a less strong man: youth, and genius, and an ancient name.[1] In spite of all three he made his way; and suffered for it. At the first chance given or taken, every obscure and obscene thing that lurks for pay or prey among the fouler shallows and thickets of literature flew against him; every hound and every hireling lavished upon him the loathsome tribute of their abuse; all nameless creatures that nibble and prowl, upon whom the serpent's curse has fallen, to go upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life, assailed him with their foulest venom and their keenest fangs. And the promise given of old to their kind was now at least fulfilled: they did bruise his heel. But the heads of such creatures are so small that it is hard to bruise them in return; it would first be necessary to discern them.

That Byron was able to disregard and to outlive the bark and the bite of such curs as these is small praise enough: the man who cannot do as much is destructible, and therefore contemptible. He did far more than this; he withstood the weight of circumstances to the end;

[1] That his youth and his rank were flung in his face with vulgar insolence on the publication of his first little book it can hardly be necessary to remind any reader of Byron; but possibly even these offences might have been condoned in a scribbler whose work had given no offensive promise of greatness yet to be. In the verses on Lochnagar at least an ominous threat or presage of something new and splendid must have been but too perceptible to the discerning eye of criticism.

not always without complaint, but always without misgiving. His glorious courage, his excellent contempt for things contemptible, and hatred of hateful men, are enough of themselves to embalm and endear his memory in the eyes of all who are worthy to pass judgment upon him. And these qualities gave much of their own value to verse not otherwise or not always praiseworthy. Even at its best, the serious poetry of Byron is often so rough and loose, so weak in the screws and joints which hold together the framework of verse, that it is not easy to praise it enough without seeming to condone or to extenuate such faults as should not be overlooked or forgiven. No poet is so badly represented by a book of selections. It must show something of his weakness; it cannot show all of his strength. Often, after a noble overture, the last note struck is either dissonant or ineffectual. His magnificent masterpiece, which must endure for ever among the precious relics of the world, will not bear dissection or extraction. The merit of "Don Juan" does not lie in any part, but in the whole. There is in that great poem an especial and exquisite balance and sustenance of alternate tones which cannot be expressed or explained by the utmost ingenuity of selection. Haidée is supplanted by Dudù, the shipwreck by the siege, the Russian court by the English household; and this perpetual change, this tidal variety of experience and emotion, gives to the poem something of the breadth and freshness of the sea. Much of the poet's earlier work is or seems unconsciously dishonest; this, if not always or wholly unaffected, is as honest as the sunlight, as frank as the sea-wind. Here, and here alone,

the student of his work may recognise and enjoy the ebb and flow of actual life. Here the pulse of vital blood may be felt in tangible flesh. Here for the first time the style of Byron is beyond all praise or blame: a style at once swift and supple, light and strong, various and radiant. Between "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" the same difference exists which a swimmer feels between lake-water and sea-water: the one is fluent, yielding, invariable; the other has in it a life and pulse, a sting and a swell, which touch and excite the nerves like fire or like music. Across the stanzas of "Don Juan" we swim forward as over "the broad backs of the sea"; they break and glitter, hiss and laugh, murmur and move, like waves that sound or that subside. There is in them a delicious resistance, an elastic motion, which salt water has and fresh water has not. There is about them a wide wholesome air, full of vivid light and constant wind, which is only felt at sea. Life undulates and death palpitates in the splendid verse which resumes the evidence of a brave and clear-sighted man concerning life and death. Here, as at sea, there is enough and too much of fluctuation and intermission; the ripple flags and falls in loose and lazy lines: the foam flies wide of any mark, and the breakers collapse here and there in sudden ruin and violent failure. But the violence and weakness of the sea are preferable to the smooth sound and equable security of a lake: its buoyant and progressive impulse sustains and propels those who would sink through weariness in the flat and placid shallows. There are others whom it sickens, and others whom it chills; these will do well to steer inshore.

It is natural in writing of Byron to slide into remembrances of what is likest to his verse. His work and Shelley's, beyond that of all our other poets, recall or suggest the wide and high things of nature; the large likeness of the elements; the immeasurable liberty and the stormy strength of waters and winds. They are strongest when they touch upon these; and it is worth remark how few are the poets of whom this can be said. Here, as elsewhere, Shakespeare is supreme when it pleased him; but it pleased him rarely. No poetry of shipwreck and the sea has ever equalled the great scene of "Pericles;" no such note of music was ever struck out of the clash and contention of tempestuous elements. In Milton the sublimity is chiefly of sound; the majesty of melodies unsurpassed from all time wellnigh excludes and supplants all other motives of material beauty. In the minds of mediæval poets there was no width or depth to receive and contain such emotion. In Spenser, despite his fertile and fluent ingenuity, his subtle and sleepy graces, the effeminacy of colour no less than the monotony of metre makes it hopeless to look for any trace of that passionate sense of power and delight in great outer things of which we speak here. Among later men, Coleridge and Keats used nature mainly as a stimulant or a sedative; Wordsworth as a vegetable fit to shred into his pot and pare down like the outer leaves of a lettuce for didactic and culinary purposes.[1] All these

[1] I remember some critical cackling over this phrase when it first appeared as over a senseless insult offered to the name and genius of a great poet. Insult is no habit of mine; and the term here used implies no more than he that runs may read in the text

doubtless in their own fashion loved her, for her beauties, for her uses, for her effects ; hardly one for herself.

Turn now to Byron or to Shelley. These two at least were not content to play with her skirts and paddle in her shallows. Their passion is perfect, a fierce and blind desire which exalts and impels their verse into the high places of emotion and expression. They feed upon nature with a holy hunger, follow her with a divine lust as of gods chasing the daughters of men. Wind and fire, the cadences of thunder and the clamours of the sea, gave to them no less of sensual pleasure than of spiritual sustenance. These things they desired as others desire music or wine or the beauty of women. This outward and indifferent nature of things, cruel in the eyes of all but her lovers, and even in theirs not loving, became as

of Wordsworth ; in whom, after the somewhat early subsidence of that "simple, sensuous, and passionate" delight in nature of which in two of his most famous poems he has for ever embalmed his recollection, the place of this rapturous instinct of submission and absorption, which other poets have been who never have ceased to feel in sight of natural glory and beauty, was taken by a meditative and moralizing spirit too apt to express itself in the tone of a preacher to whom all the divine life of things outside man is but as raw material for philosophic or theological cookery. How far this method of contemplating and interpreting the splendours and terrors of nature differs from that of his greatest contemporaries it is surely neither irrelevant nor impertinent to point out once more. Wide apart as lay their lines of work, it is true alike of Shelley and of Keats that for them it was not fated, nor could it ever have been possible, to outlive

"The hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;"

nor could Byron, while retaining as did Wordsworth the freshness and the force of his genius, have outlived his more fiery delight in the triumphant life of sea and cloud and storm

pliant to their grasp and embrace as any Clymene or Leucothea to Apollo's. To them the large motions and the remote beauties of space were tangible and familiar as flowers. Of this poetry, where description melts into passion and contemplation takes fire from delight, the highest sample is Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." An imperfect mastery of his materials keeps the best things of Byron some few degrees below an equal rank. One native and incurable defect grew up and strengthened side by side with his noblest qualities : a feeble and faulty sense of metre. No poet of equal or inferior rank ever had so bad an ear. His smoother cadences are often vulgar and facile ; his fresher notes are often incomplete and inharmonious. His verse stumbles and jingles, stammers and halts, where there is most need for a swift and even pace of musical sound. The rough sonorous changes of the songs in the "Deformed Transformed" rise far higher in harmony and strike far deeper into the memory than the lax easy lines in which he at first indulged ; but they slip too readily into notes as rude and weak as the rhymeless tuneless verse in which they are so loosely set, as in a cheap and casual frame. The magnificent lyric measures of "Heaven and Earth" are defaced by the coarse obtrusion of short lines with jagged edges : no small offence in a writer of verse. Otherwise these choral scenes are almost as blameless as they are brilliant. The poet who above others took delight in the sense of sounding storms and shaken waters could not but exult over the vision of deluge with all his strength and breadth of wing. Tempest and rebellion and the magnificence of anguish were as the natural food and fire

to kindle and sustain his indomitable and sleepless spirit. The godless martyrdom of rebels ; the passion that cannot redeem ; the Thebaid whose first hermit was Cain, the Calvary whose first martyr was Satan ; these, time after time, allured and inspired him. Here for once this inner and fiery passion of thought found outer clothing and expression in the ruin of a world. Both without and within, the subject was made for him, and lay ready shapen for the strong impressure of his hand. His love of wide and tempestuous waters fills his work throughout as with the broad breath of a sea-wind. Even the weakest of his poems, a thing still-born and shapeless, is redeemed and revived by one glorious verse :—

"When the Poles crashed, and water was the world."

This passion and power in dealing with the higher things of nature, with her large issues and remote sources, has been bestowed upon Victor Hugo alone among our contemporaries. He also can pass beyond the idyllic details of landscape, and put out from shore into the wide waste places of the sea. And this of course is the loftiest form of such poetry as deals with outward nature and depends upon the forms of things. In Byron the power given by this passion is the more conspicuous through his want of dramatic capacity. Except in the lighter and briefer scenes of "Don Juan," he was never able to bring two speakers face to face and supply them with the right words. In structure as in metre his elaborate tragedies are wholly condemnable ; filled as they are in spirit with the overflow of his fiery energy. "Cain" and "Manfred" are properly monologues decorated and set off

by some slight appendage of ornament or explanation. In the later and loftier poem there is no difference perceptible, except in strength and knowledge, between Lucifer and Cain. Thus incompetent to handle the mysteries and varieties of character, Byron turns always with a fresh delight and a fresh confidence thither where he feels himself safe and strong. No part of his nature was more profound and sincere than the vigorous love of such inanimate things as were in tune with his own spirit and senses. His professions of contempt were too loud to express it; scorn is brief or silent; anger alone finds vent in violent iteration and clamorous appeal. He had too much of fury and not enough of contempt; he foams at things and creatures not worth a glance or a blow. But when once clear of men and confronted with elements, he casts the shell of pretence and drops the veil of habit; then, as in the last and highest passage of a poem which has suffered more from praise than any other from dispraise, his scorn of men caught in the nets of nature and necessity has no alloy of untruth; his spirit is mingled with the sea's, and overlooks with a superb delight the ruins and the prayers of men.

This loftiest passage in "Childe Harold" has been so often mouthed and mauled by vulgar admiration that it now can scarcely be relished. Like a royal robe worn out, or a royal wine grown sour, it seems the worse for having been so good. But in fact, allowing for one or two slips and blots, we must after all replace it among the choice and high possessions of poetry. After the first there is hardly a weak line; many have a wonderful vigour and melody; and the deep and glad disdain of

the sea for men and the works of men passes nto the verse in music and fills it with a weighty and sonorous harmony grave and sweet as the measured voice of heavy remote waves. No other passage in the fourth canto will bear to be torn out from the text; and this one suffers by extraction. The other three cantos are more loosely built and less compact of fabric; but in the first two there is little to remember or to praise. Much of the poem is written throughout in falsetto; there is a savour in many places as of something false and histrionic. This singular and deep defect, which defaces so much of Byron's work, seems also to have deformed his personal character, to have given a twist to his enmities and left a taint upon his friendships. He was really somewhat sombre and sad at heart, and it pleased him to seem sadder than he was. He was impressible and susceptible of pleasure, able to command and enjoy it; and of this also it pleased him to make the most in public. But in fact he was neither a Harold nor a Juan; he was better than these in his own way, and assumed their parts and others with a hypocrisy but half insincere. The fault was probably in great part unconscious, and transparent as a child's acting. To the keen eye and cool judgment of Stendhal it was at once perceptible. Byron's letter to him in defence of Scott was doubtless not insincere; yet it is evident that the writer felt himself to be playing a graceful part to advantage. This fretful and petulant appetite for applause, the proper apanage of small poets and lowly aspirants, had in Byron's case to wrestle with the just pride of place and dignity of genius; no man ever had more of these; yet

they did not always support him; he fell even into follies and vulgarities unworthy of a meaner name than his. In effect, when his errors were gravest, he erred through humility and not through pride. Pride would have sustained him far above the remarks and reviews of his day, the praise or dispraise of his hour. As it was, he was vulnerable even by creeping things; and at times their small stings left a poison behind which turned his blood. The contagion of their touch infected him; and he strove under its influence to hiss and wound as they. Here and there in his letters and reflections, in the loose records of his talk and light fragments of his work, the traces of infection are flagrant.

But these defects were only as scars on the skin, superficial and removable; they are past and done with; while all of him that was true and good remains, as it will to all time. Justice cannot be done to it here or now. It is enough if after careful selection as little injustice be done as possible. His few sonnets, unlike Shelley's, are all good; the best is that on Bonnivard, one of his noblest and completest poems. The versified narratives which in their day were so admirable and famous have yielded hardly a stray sheaf to the gleaner. They have enough of vigour and elasticity to keep life in them yet; but once chipped or broken their fabric would crumble and collapse. The finest among them is certainly either the "Giaour" or the "Siege of Corinth;" the weakest is probably either "Parisina" or the "Bride of Abydos." But in none of these is there even a glimpse of Byron's higher and rarer faculty. All that can be said for them is that they gave tokens of a talent singularly fertile, rapid

and vivid; a certain power of action and motion which redeems them from the complete stagnation of dead verses; a command over words and rhymes never of the best and never of the worst. In the "Giaour," indeed, there is something of a fiery sincerity which in its successors appears diluted and debased.[1]

The change began in Byron when he first found out his comic power, and rose at once beyond sight or shot of any rival. His early satires are wholly devoid of humour, wit, or grace; the verse of "Beppo," bright and soft and fluent, is full at once of all. The sweet light music of its few and low notes was perfect as a prelude to the higher harmonies of laughter and tears, of scorn and passion, which as yet lay silent in the future. It is mere folly to seek in English or Italian verse a precedent or a parallel. The scheme of metre is Byron's alone; no weaker hand than his could ever bend that bow, or

[1] Remembering the success of these stories, we may believe that Byron's contempt for the critical fashions of a time which extolled his worst work was not wholly affected or assumed; and understand how the instincts of opposition and reaction drove him back into that open idolatry of Pope and his school which he expressed loudly and foolishly enough. Probably at heart he did really prefer Pope to all men. His critical faculty, if I may steal one phrase from a treasury that may well spare me the loan, was "zero, or even a frightful *minus* quantity;" his judgment never worth the expense of a thought or a word. Besides, he had striven to emulate or at least to copy the exquisite manner of Pope in his satires, and must have seen how great and impassable a gulf lay between the master and his pupil. This would naturally lead him to over-estimate what he could not attain: the delicate merit, the keen perfection, the equable balance of force and finish, of sense and style, which raised his favourite so high among writers, if they left him somewhat low among poets; and having himself so bad an ear for metre, he may even have imagined that Pope's verse was musical.

ever will. Even the Italian poets, working in a language more flexible and ductile than ours, could never turn their native metre to such uses, could never handle their national weapon with such grace and strength. The *terza rima* remains their own, after all our efforts to adapt it; it bears here only forced flowers and crude fruits;[1] but the *ottava rima* Byron has fairly conquered and wrested from them. Before the appearance of "Beppo" no one could foresee what a master's hand might make of the instrument; and no one could predict its further use and its dormant powers before the advent of "Don Juan." In the "Vision of Judgment" it appears finally perfected; the metre fits the sense as with close and pliant armour, the perfect panoply of Achilles. A poem so short and hasty, based on a matter so worthy of brief contempt and long oblivion as the funeral and the fate of George III., bears about it at first sight no great sign or likelihood of life. But this poem which we have by us stands alone, not in Byron's work only, but in the work of the world. Satire in earlier times had changed her rags for robes; Juvenal had clothed with fire, and Dryden with majesty, that wandering and bastard Muse. Byron gave her wings to fly with, above the reach even of these.

[1] I do not of course forget that our own time has produced two noble poems in this foreign and alien metre; but neither "Casa Guidi Windows" nor "The Defence of Guenevere" will suffice to establish its general excellence or fitness. The poets have done so well because they could do no less; but there may be at once good material and good workmanship without good implements. Neither of them has done more to give footing in England to he metre of their poems than did Byron himself by his "Prophecy of Dante." They have done better than this; but this they have not done.

Others have had as much of passion and as much of humour; Dryden had perhaps as much of both combined. But here and not elsewhere a third quality is apparent: the sense of a high and clear imagination. The grave and great burlesque of King George and St. Peter is relieved and sustained by the figures of Michael and Satan. These two, confronted and corresponding as noon and night, lift and light up the background of satire, blood-red or black according to the point of view. Above all, the balance of thought and passion is admirable; human indignation and divine irony are alike understood and expressed: the pure and fiery anger of men at sight of wrong-doing, the tacit inscrutable derision of heaven. Upon this light and lofty poem a commentary might be written longer than the text and less worth reading; but here it shall not be. Those who read it with the due delight, not too gravely and not too lightly, will understand more than can now be set down; those who read it otherwise will not understand anything. Even these can hardly fail to admire the vigour and variety of scorn, the beauty and the bitterness of verse, which raise it beyond comparison with any other satire. There is enough and too much of violence and injustice in the lines on Southey; but it must be remembered that he was the first to strike, and with an unfair weapon. A poet by profession, he had assaulted with feeble fury another poet, not on the fair and open charge of bad verses, but under the impertinent and irrelevant plea that his work was an affliction or an offence to religion and morality—the most susceptible, as the most intangible, among the creatures of metaphor. A man less irritable

and less powerful than Byron might be forgiven for any reprisals; and the excellence of his verses justifies their injustice. But that Southey, who could win and retain for life the love and the praise of Landor, was capable of conscious baseness or falsity, Byron himself in sober moments should hardly have believed. Between official adoration and not less official horror—between George deified and Byron denounced—the Laureate's position was grotesque enough. It was almost a good office to pelt him with the names of hireling and apostate; these charges he could reject and refute. The facts were surely sufficient: that, as to religion, his "present Deity" was the paltriest maniac among kings and Cæsars; as to morality, his feelings or his faith obliged him to decry as pernicious the greatest work of his opponent.

Side by side with the growth of his comic and satiric power, the graver genius of Byron increased and flourished. As the tree grew higher it grew shapelier; the branches it put forth on all sides were fairer of leaf and fuller of fruit than its earlier offshoots had promised. But from these hardly a stray bud or twig can be plucked off by way of sample. No detached morsel of "Don Juan," no dismembered fragment of "Cain," will serve to show or to suggest the excellence of either. These poems are coherent and complete as trees or flowers; they cannot be split up and parcelled out like a mosaic of artificial jewellery, which might be taken to pieces by the same artisan who put it together. It must then be remembered that any mere selection from the verse of Byron, however much of care and of goodwill be spent upon the task, must perforce either exclude or impair his very greatest work.

Cancel or select a leaf from these poems, and you will injure the whole framework equally in either case. It is not without reluctance that I have given any extracts from "Don Juan;" it is not without a full sense of the damage done to these extracts by the very act of extraction. But I could only have left them untouched with a reluctance even greater; and this plea, if it can, must excuse me. As fragments they are exquisite and noble, like the broken hand or severed foot of a Greek statue; but here as much is lost as there. Taken with their context, they regain as much of beauty and of force as the sculptured foot or hand when, reunited to the perfect body, they resume their place and office among its vital and various limbs. This gift of life and variety is the supreme quality of Byron's chief poem; a quality which cannot be expressed by any system of extracts. Little can here be given beyond a sample or two of tragic and serious work. The buoyant beauty of surrounding verse, the "innumerable laughter" and the profound murmur of its many measures, the fervent flow of stanzas now like the ripples and now like the gulfs of the sea, can no more be shown by process of selection than any shallow salt pool left in the sand for sunbeams to drain dry can show the depth and length of the receding tide.

It would be waste of words and time here to enlarge at all upon the excellence of the pure comedy of "Don Juan." From the first canto to the sixteenth; from the defence of Julia, which is worthy of Congreve or Molière, to the study of Adeline, which is worthy of Laclos or Balzac; the elastic energy of humour never falters or

flags. English criticism, with a mournful murmur of unanimous virtue, did at the time, and may yet if it please, appeal against the satire which strikes home and approve the satire that flies abroad. It was said, and perhaps is still said, that the poem falls off and runs low towards the end. Those who can discover where a change for the worse begins might at least indicate the landmark, imperceptible to duller eyes, which divides the good from the bad. Others meantime will retain their belief that this cry was only raised because in these latter cantos a certain due amount of satire fell upon the false and corrupt parts of English character, its mealy-mouthed vices and its unsound virtues. Had the scene been shifted to Italy or France, we might have heard little of the poet's failing power and perverse injustice.

It is just worth a word of notice that Byron, like Fielding before him, has caught up a well-known name and prefixed it to his work, without any attempt or desire to retain the likeness or follow the tradition attached to it. With him Don Juan is simply a man somewhat handsomer and luckier than others of his age. This hero is not even a reduced copy of the great and terrible figure with which he has nothing in common but a name. The Titan of embodied evil, the likeness of sin made flesh, which grew up in the grave and bitter imagination of a Spanish poet, steeped in the dyes and heated by the flames of hell, appears even in the hands of Molière diminished, and fallen as it were from Satan to Belial; but still splendid with intellect and courage that tower above the meaner minds and weaker wills of women and of men; still inflexible to human appeal and indomitable

by divine anger. To crush him, heaven is compelled to use thunder and hell-fire; and by these, though stricken, he is not subdued. The sombre background of a funereal religion is not yet effaced; but it tasked the whole strength of Molière, gigantic as that strength was, to grapple with the shadow of this giant, to transfigure upon a new stage the tragic and enormous incarnation of supreme sin. As it is, even when playing with his debtors or his peasants, the hero of Molière retains always some feature of his first likeness, some shadow of his early shape. But further than France the terrible legend has never moved. Rigid criticism would therefore say that the title of Byron's masterpiece was properly a misnomer: which is no great matter after all, since the new Juan can never be confounded with the old.

Of Byron's smaller poems there is less to say, and less space to say it. Their splendid merits and their visible defects call neither for praise nor blame. Their place and his, in the literature of England, are fixed points: no critical astronomy of the future can lower or can raise them: they have their own station for all time among the greater and the lesser stars. As a poet, Byron was surpassed, beyond all question and all comparison, by three men at least of his own time; and matched, if not now and then overmatched, by one or two others. The verse of Wordsworth, at its highest, went higher than his; the verse of Landor flowed clearer. But his own ground, where none but he could set foot, was lofty enough, fertile and various. Nothing in Byron is so worthy of wonder and admiration as the scope and range of his power. New fields and ways of work, had he lived, might have given

room for exercise and matter for triumph to "that most fiery spirit."[1] As it is, his work was done at Missolonghi; all of his work for which the fates could spare him time. A little space was allowed him to show at least a heroic purpose, and attest a high design; then, with all things unfinished before him and behind, he fell asleep after many troubles and triumphs. Few can ever have gone wearier to the grave; none with less fear. He had done enough to earn his rest. Forgetful now and set free for ever from all faults and foes, he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death out of reach of time, out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred, beyond the blame of England and the praise of Greece. In the full strength of spirit and of body his destiny overtook him, and made an end of all his labours. He had seen and borne and achieved more than most men on record. "He was a great man, good at many things, and now he has attained this also, to be at rest."

[1] The noble verses of Shelley are fitter to be spoken over Byron than over any first or last Napoleon. To no other man could they be so well applied: for the world indeed took more of warmth from the fire of his spirit while alive than from any other then kindled:—

"What! alive and so bold, O Earth?
Art thou not over-bold?
What! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold?
* * * * * *
Thou wert warming thy fingers old
O'er the embers covered and cold
Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled:
What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead?"

COLERIDGE.

THE great man of whom I am about to speak seems to me a figure more utterly companionless, more incomparable with others, than any of his kind. Receptive at once and communicative of many influences, he has received from none and to none did he communicate any of those which mark him as a man memorable to all students of men. What he learnt and what he taught are not the precious things in him. He has founded no school of poetry, as Wordsworth has, or Byron, or Tennyson; happy in this, that he has escaped the plague of pupils and parodists. Has he founded a school of philosophy? He has helped men to think; he has touched their thought with passing colours of his own thought; but has he moved and moulded it into new and durable shapes? Others may judge better of this than I, but to me, set beside the deep direct work of those thinkers who have actual power to break down and build up thought, to construct faith or destroy it, his work seems not as theirs is. And yet how very few are even the great names we could not better afford to spare, would not gladlier miss from the roll of "famous men and our fathers that were before us." Of his best verses I venture

to affirm that the world has nothing like them, and can never have: that they are of the highest kind, and of their own. They are jewels of the diamond's price, flowers of the rose's rank, but unlike any rose or diamond known. In all times there have been gods that alighted and giants that appeared on earth; the ranks of great men are properly divisible, not into thinkers and workers, but into Titans and Olympians. Sometimes a supreme poet is both at once: such above all men is Æschylus; so also Dante, Michel Angelo, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Hugo, are gods at once and giants; they have the lightning as well as the light of the world, and in hell they have command as in heaven; they can see in the night as by day. As godlike as these, even as the divinest of them, a poet such as Coleridge needs not the thews and organs of any Titan to make him greater. Judged by the justice of other men, he is assailable and condemnable on several sides; his good work is the scantiest in quantity ever done by a man so famous in so long a life; and much of his work is bad. His genius is fluctuant and moonstruck as the sea is, and yet his mind is not, what he described Shakespeare's to be, "an oceanic mind." His plea against all accusers must be that of Shakespeare, a plea unanswerable:

> "I am that I am; and they that level
> At my abuses reckon up their own."

"I am that I am;" it is the only solid and durable reply to any impertinence of praise or blame. We hear too much and too often of circumstances or accidents which extenuate this thing or qualify that; and such, no doubt,

there always may be; but usually—at least it seems so to me—we get out of each man what he has in him to give. Probably at no other time, under no other conditions, would Coleridge for example have done better work or more. His flaws and failures are as much ingrained in him as his powers and achievements.

For from the very first the two sides of his mind are visible and palpable. Among all verses of boys who were to grow up great, I remember none so perfect, so sweet and deep in sense and sound, as those which he is said to have written at school, headed "Time, Real and Imaginary." And following hard on these come a score or two of "poems" each more feeble and more flatulent than the last. Over these and the like I shall pass with all due speed, being undesirous to trouble myself or any possible reader with the question whether "Religious Musings" be more damnable than "Lines to a Young Ass," or less damnable. Even when clear of these brambles, his genius walked for some time over much waste ground with irregular and unsure steps. Some poems, touched with exquisite grace, with clear and pure harmony, are tainted with somewhat of feeble and sickly which impairs our relish; "Lewti" for instance, an early sample of his admirable melody, of tender colour and dim grace as of clouds, but effeminate in build, loose-hung, weak of eye and foot. Yet nothing of more precious and rare sweetness exists in verse than that stanza of the swans disturbed. His style indeed was a plant of strangely slow growth, but perfect and wonderful in its final flower. Even in the famous verses called "Love" he has not attained to that strength and solidity

of beauty which was his special gift at last. For melody rather than for harmony it is perfect; but in this œnomel there is as yet more of honey than of wine.

Coleridge was the reverse of Antæus; the contact of earth took all strength out of him. He could not handle to much purpose any practical creed; his political verse is most often weak of foot and hoarse of accent. There is a graceful Asiatic legend cited by his friend Southey of "the footless birds of Paradise" who have only wings to sustain them, and live their lives out in a perpetual flight through the clearest air of heaven. Ancient naturalists, Cardan and Aldrovandus, had much dispute and dissertation as to the real or possible existence of these birds, as to whether the female did in effect lay her eggs in a hollow of the male's back, designed by nature to that end; whether they could indeed live on falling dew; and so forth. These questions we may presume to be decided; but it is clear and certain enough that men have been found to live in much this fashion. Such a footless bird of Paradise was Coleridge; and had his wings always held out it had been well for him and us. Unhappily this winged and footless creature would perforce too often furl his wings in mid air and try his footing on earth, where his gait was like a swan's on shore.

Of his flight and his song when in the fit element, it is hard to speak at all, hopeless to speak adequately. It is natural that there should be nothing like them discoverable in any human work; natural that his poetry at its highest should be, as it is, beyond all praise and all words of men. He who can define it could "unweave a rainbow;" he who could praise it aright would be such

another as the poet. The "Christabel," the "Kubla Khan," with one or two more, are outside all law and jurisdiction of ours. When it has been said that such melodies were never heard, such dreams never dreamed, such speech never spoken, the chief thing remains unsaid, and unspeakable. There is a charm upon these poems which can only be felt in silent submission of wonder. Any separate line has its own heavenly beauty, but to cite separate lines is intolerable. They are to be received in a rapture of silence; such a silence as Chapman describes; silence like a god "peaceful and young," which

> "Left so free mine ears,
> That I might hear the music of the spheres,
> *And all the angels singing out of heaven.*"[1]

More amenable to our judgment, and susceptible of a more definite admiration, the "Ancient Mariner," and the few other poems cast in something of a ballad type which we may rank around or below it, belong to another class. The chief of these is so well known that it needs no fresh comment. Only I will say that to some it may seem as though this great sea-piece might have had more in it of the air and savour of the sea. Perhaps it is none the worse; and indeed any one speaking of so great and famous a poem must feel and know that it cannot but be right, although he or another may think it would be better if this were retrenched or that appended. And this poem is beyond question one of the supreme triumphs of poetry. Witness the men who brought batteries to bear on it right and left. Literally: for

[1] *Euthymiæ Raptus; The Tears of Peace* (1609).

one critic said that the "moral sentiment" had impaired the imaginative excellence; another, that it failed and fell through for want of a moral foothold upon facts. Remembering these things, I am reluctant to proceed—but desirous to praise, as I best may. Though I doubt if it be worth while, seeing how the "Ancient Mariner"—praised or dispraised—lives and is like to live for the delight equally of young boys and old men; and seeing also that the last critic cited was no less a man than Hazlitt. It is fortunate—among many misfortunes—that for Coleridge no warning word was needed against the shriek of the press-gang from this side or that. He stooped once or twice to spurn them; but he knew that he stooped. His intense and overwrought abstraction from things of the day or hour did him no ill service here.

The "Ancient Mariner" has doubtless more of breadth and space, more of material force and motion, than anything else of the poet's. And the tenderness of sentiment which touches with significant colour the pure white imagination is here no longer morbid or languid, as in the earlier poems of feeling and emotion. It is soft and piteous enough, but womanly rather than effeminate; and thus serves indeed to set off the strange splendours and boundless beauties of the story. For the execution, I presume no human eye is too dull to see how perfect it is, and how high in kind of perfection. Here is not the speckless and elaborate finish which shows everywhere the fresh rasp of file or chisel on its smooth and spruce excellence; this is faultless after the fashion of a flower or a tree. Thus it has grown: not thus has it been carved.

Nevertheless, were we compelled to the choice, I for

one would rather preserve "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel" than any other of Coleridge's poems. It is more conceivable that another man should be born capable of writing the "Ancient Mariner" than one capable of writing these. The former is perhaps the most wonderful of all poems. In reading it we seem rapt into that paradise revealed to Swedenborg, where music and colour and perfume were one, where you could hear the hues and see the harmonies of heaven. For absolute melody and splendour it were hardly rash to call it the first poem in the language. An exquisite instinct married to a subtle science of verse has made it the supreme model of music in our language, a model unapproachable except by Shelley. All the elements that compose the perfect form of English metre, as limbs and veins and features a beautiful body of man, were more familiar, more subject as it were, to this great poet than to any other. How, for instance, no less than rhyme, assonance and alliteration are forces, requisite components of high and ample harmony, witness once for all the divine passage [1] which begins—

"Five miles meandering with a mazy motion," &c.

All these least details and delicacies of work are worth notice when the result of them is so transcendent. Every line of the poem might be subjected to the like scrutiny, but the student would be none the nearer to the

[1] Witness also the matchless fragments of metrical criticism in Coleridge's "Remains," which prove with what care and relish the most sweet and perfect melodist among all our poets would set himself to examine and explain the alternations and sequences of sound in the noblest verse of others.

master's secret. The spirit, the odour in it, the cloven tongue of fire that rests upon its forehead, is a thing neither explicable nor communicable.

Of all Coleridge's poems the loveliest is assuredly "Christabel." It is not so vast in scope and reach of imagination as the "Ancient Mariner;" it is not so miraculous as "Kubla Khan;" but for simple charm of inner and outer sweetness it is unequalled by either. The very terror and mystery of magical evil is imbued with this sweetness; the witch has no less of it than the maiden; their contact has in it nothing dissonant or disfiguring, nothing to jar or to deface the beauty and harmony of the whole imagination. As for the melody, here again it is incomparable with any other poet's. Shelley indeed comes nearest; but for purity and volume of music Shelley is to Coleridge as a lark to a nightingale; his song heaven-high and clear as heaven, but the other's more rich and weighty, more passionately various, and warmer in effusion of sound.[1] On the other hand, the nobler nature, the clearer spirit of Shelley, fills his verse with a divine force of meaning, which Coleridge, who had it not in him, could not affect to give. That sensuous fluctuation of soul, that floating fervour of fancy, whence his poetry rose as from a shifting sea, in faultless completion of form and charm, had absorbed—if indeed there were any to absorb—all

[1] From this general rule I except of course the transcendent antiphonal music which winds up the "Prometheus" of Shelley, and should perhaps except also the "Ode to the West Wind," and the close of the "Ode to Naples." Against "Christabel" it would for example be fairer to set "The Sensitive Plant" for comparison of harmonies.

emotion of love or faith, all heroic beauty of moral passion, all inner and outer life of the only kind possible to such other poets as Dante or Shelley, Milton or Hugo. This is neither blameable nor regrettable; none of these could have done his work; nor could he have done it had he been in any way other or better than he was. Neither, for that matter, could we have had a Hamlet or a Faust from any of these, the poets of moral faith and passion, any more than a "Divina Commedia" from Shakespeare, a "Prometheus Unbound" from Goethe. Let us give thanks for each after their kind to nature and the fates.

Alike by his powers and his impotences, by his capacity and his defect, Coleridge was inapt for dramatic poetry. It were no discredit to have fallen short of Shelley on this side, to be overcome by him who has written the one great English play of modern times; but here the very comparison would seem a jest. There is little worth praise or worth memory in the "Remorse" except such casual fragments of noble verse as may readily be detached from the loose and friable stuff in which they lie imbedded. In the scene of the incantation, in the scene of the dungeon, there are two such pure and precious fragments of gold. In the part of Alhadra there are lofty and sonorous interludes of declamation and reflection. The characters are flat and shallow; the plot is at once languid, violent, and heavy. To touch the string of the spirit, thread the weft of evil and good, feel out the way of the soul through dark places of thought and rough places of action, was not given to this the sweetest dreamer of dreams. In

"Zapolya" there are no such patches of imperial purple sewn on, but there is more of air and motion; little enough indeed of high dramatic quality, but a native grace and ease which give it something of the charm of life. In this lighter and more rapid work, the song of Glycine flashes out like a visible sunbeam; it is one of the brightest bits of music ever done into words.

The finest of Coleridge's odes is beyond all doubt the "Ode to France." Shelley declared it the finest of modern times, and justly, until himself and Keats had written up to it at least. It were profitless now to discuss whether it should take or yield precedence when weighed with the "Ode to Liberty" or the "Ode to Naples." There is in it a noble and loyal love of freedom, though less fiery at once and less firm than Shelley's, as it proved in the end less durable and deep. The prelude is magnificent in music, and in sentiment and emotion far above any other of his poems; nor are the last notes inadequate to this majestic overture. Equal in force and sweetness of style, the "Ode on Dejection" ranks next in my mind to this one; some may prefer its vaguer harmonies and sunset colours to the statelier movement, the more august and solemn passion of the earlier ode.[1]

[1] Some time later, when France, already stripped of freedom and violated by treason, was openly paraded in her prostitution to the first Buonaparte, Coleridge published his "Ode to Tranquillity," beginning with two stanzas since retrenched. Having unearthed them in the "Annual Register for 1801" (vol. xliii., p. 525), I set them down here as better worth saving than most of his political verse: —

It is noticeable that only his supreme gift of lyrical power could sustain Coleridge on political ground. His attempts of the kind in blank verse are poor indeed : -

"Untimely breathings, sick and short assays."

Compare the nerveless and hysterical verses headed "Fears in Solitude" (exquisite as is the overture, faultless in tone and colour, and worthy of a better sequel) with the majestic and masculine sonnet of Wordsworth, written at the same time on the same subject : the lesser poet—for, great as he is, I at least cannot hold Wordsworth, though so much the stronger and more admirable man, equal to Coleridge as mere poet—speaks with a calm force of thought and resolution; Coleridge wails, appeals, deprecates, objurgates in a flaccid and querulous fashion without heart or spirit. This debility of mind and manner is set off in strong relief by the loveliness of landscape touches in the same poem. The

"What statesmen scheme, and soldiers work;
Whether the Pontiff or the Turk
Will e'er renew th' expiring lease
Of empire; whether war or peace
Will best play off the Consul's game;
What fancy-figures, and what name,
Half-thoughted, sensual France, a natural slave,
On those ne'er-broken chains, her self-forg'd chains, will grave;

"Disturb[s] not me! Some tears I shed
When bow'd the Swiss his noble head;
Since then, with quiet heart have view'd
Both distant fights and treaties crude,
Whose heap'd-up terms, which fear compels,
(Live Discord's green combustibles,
And future fuel of the funeral pyre)
Now hide, and soon, alas! will feed the low-burnt fire."

eclogue of "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," being lyrical, is worthier of a great name; it has force and motion enough to keep it alive yet and fresh, impeded and trammelled though it usually be by the somewhat vain and verbose eloquence of a needlessly "Apologetic Preface." Blank verse Coleridge could never handle with the security of conscious skill and a trained strength; it grows in his hands too facile and feeble to carry the due weight or accomplish the due work. I have not found any of his poems in this metre retouched and reinvigorated as a few have been among his others. One such alteration is memorable to all students of his art; the excision from the "Ancient Mariner" of a stanza (eleventh of the Third Part) which described the Death-mate of the Spectre-Woman, his bones foul with leprous scurf and green corruption of the grave, in contrast to the red lips and yellow locks of the fearfuller Nightmare Life-in-Death. Keats in like manner cut off from the "Ode on Melancholy" a first stanza preserved for us by his biographer, who has duly noted the delicate justice of instinct implied by this rejection of all ghastly and violent images, however noble and impressive in their violence and ghastliness, from a poem full only of the subtle sorrow born of beauty. The same keen and tender sense of right made Coleridge reject from his work the horrors while retaining the terrors of death. But of his studies in blank verse he seems to have taken no such care. They remain mostly in a hybrid or an embryonic state, with birthmarks on them of debility or malformation. Two of these indeed have a charm of their own, not shallow or transient: the

"Nightingale" and "Frost at Midnight." In colour they are perfect, and not (as usual) too effusive and ebullient in style. Others, especially some of the domestic or religious sort, are offensive and grievous to the human sense on that score. Coleridge had doubtless a sincere belief in his own sincerity of belief, a true feeling of his own truth of feeling; but he leaves with us too often an unpleasant sense or taste—as it were a tepid dilution of sentiment, a rancid unction of piety. A singular book published in 1835 without author's name—the work, as I find, of a Mr. Alsop, long after to be advertised for on public placards as an accomplice in the enterprise which clouded the fiery fame and closed the heroic life of Felice Orsini—gives further samples of this in "Letters, Conversations and Recollections;" samples that we might well have spared.[1] A selection from his notes and remains, from his correspondence and the records of his "Table-Talk," even from such books as Cottle's and this anonymous disciple's, would be of real interest and value, if well edited, sifted and weeded of tares and chaff. The rare fragments of work done or speech spoken in his latter years are often fragments of gold beyond price. His plastic power and flexible charm of verse, though shown only in short flashes of

[1] It contains however among others one elaborate letter of some interest and significance, in which Coleridge, not without a tone of contempt, falls foul of the orthodox vulgarity of Wordsworth's theism ("what Hartley," his son, I presume, "calls the popping in of the old man with a beard") in a fashion showing how far apart his own theosophic mysticism, though never so daintily dressed up in cast church-clothes, had drifted from the more clear and rigid views of a harder and sounder mind.

song, lose nothing of the old freshness and life. To the end he was the same whose "sovereign sway and masterdom" of music could make sweet and strong even the feeble and tuneless form of metre called hexameters in English; if form of metre that may be called which has neither metre nor form. But the majestic rush and roll of that irregular anapæstic measure used once or twice by this supreme master of them all, no student can follow without an exultation of enjoyment. The "Hymn to the Earth" has a sonorous and oceanic strength of harmony, a grace and a glory of life, which fill the sense with a vigorous delight. Of such later work as the divine verses on "Youth and Age," "The Garden of Boccaccio," sun-bright and honey-sweet, "Work without Hope" (what more could be left to hope for when the man could already do such work?)—of these, and of how many more! what can be said but that they are perfect, flawless, priceless? Nor did his most delicate and profound power of criticism ever fail him or fall off. To the perfection of that rare faculty there were but two things wanting: self-command and the natural cunning of words which has made many lesser men as strong as he was weak in the matter of verbal emendation. In that line of labour his hand was unsure and infirm. Want of self-command, again, left him often to the mercy of a caprice which swept him through tangled and tortuous ways of thought, through brakes and byways of fancy, where the solid subject in hand was either utterly lost and thrown over, or so transmuted and transfigured that any recognition of it was as hopeless as any profit. In an essay well worth translating out of jargon into some human lan-

guage, he speaks of "the holy jungle of transcendental metaphysics." Out of that holy and pestilential jungle he emerged but too rarely into sunlight and clear air. It is not depth of thought which makes obscure to others the work of a thinker; real and offensive obscurity comes merely of inadequate thought embodied in inadequate language. What is clearly comprehended or conceived, what is duly thought and wrought out, must find for itself and seize upon the clearest and fullest expression. That grave and deep matter should be treated with the fluency and facility proper to light and slight things, no fool is foolish enough to desire: but we may at least demand that whatever of message a speaker may have for us be delivered without impediment of speech. A style that stammers and rambles and stumbles, that stagnates here, and there overflows into waste marsh relieved only by thick patches of powdery bulrush and such bright flowerage of barren blossom as is bred of the fogs and the fens—such a style gives no warrant of depth or soundness in the matter thus arrayed and set forth. What grains of truth or seeds of error were borne this way or that on the perpetual tide of talk concerning "subject and object," "reason and understanding," those who can or who care may at their leisure determine with the due precision. If to the man's critical and philosophic faculty there had been added a formative power as perfect as was added to his poetic faculty, the fruit might possibly have been wellnigh as precious after its kind. As it is, we must judge of his poetic faculty by what is accomplished; of the other we must judge, not by what is accomplished, but by what is suggested. And the value of

this is sometimes great, though the value of that be generally small : so great indeed that we cannot weigh or measure its influence and its work.

Our study and our estimate of Coleridge cannot now be discoloured or misguided by the attraction or repulsion to which all contemporary students or judges of a great man's work cannot but be more or less liable. Few men, I suppose, ever inspired more of either feeling than he in his time did. To us his moral or social qualities, his opinion on this matter and his action in that, are nothing except in so far as they affect the work done, the inheritance bequeathed us. With all fit admiration and gratitude for the splendid fragments so bequeathed of a critical and philosophic sort, I doubt his being remembered, except by a small body of his elect, as other than a poet. His genius was so great, and in its greatness so many-sided, that for some studious disciples of the rarer kind he will doubtless, seen from any possible point of view, have always something about him of the old magnetism and magic. The ardour, delicacy, energy of his intellect, his resolute desire to get at the roots of things and deeper yet, if deeper might be, will always enchant and attract all spirits of like mould and temper. But as a poet his place is indisputable. It is high among the highest of all time. An age that should forget or neglect him might neglect or forget any poet that ever lived. At least, any poet whom it did remember such an age would remember as something other than a poet ; it would prize and praise in him, not the absolute and distinctive quality, but something empirical or accidental. That may be said of this

one which can hardly be said of any but the greatest among men ; that come what may to the world in course of time, it will never see his place filled. Other and stronger men, with fuller control and concentration of genius, may do more service, may bear more fruit ; but such as his was they will not have in them to give. The highest lyric work is either passionate or imaginative ; of passion Coleridge's has nothing; but for height and perfection of imaginative quality he is the greatest of lyric poets. This was his special power, and this is his special praise.

JOHN FORD.

WHENEVER the name of the poet Ford comes back to us, it comes back splendid with the light of another man's genius. The fiery panegyric of Charles Lamb is as an aureole behind it. That high-pitched note of critical and spiritual enthusiasm exalts even to disturbance our own sense of admiration; possibly, too, even to some after injustice of reaction in the rebound of mind. Certainly, on the one hand, we see that the spirit of the critic has been kindled to excess by contact and apprehension of the poet's; as certainly, on the other hand, we see the necessary excellence of that which could so affect and so attach the spirit of another man, and of such another man as Lamb. And the pure excess of admiration for things indeed admirable, of delight in things indeed delightful, is itself also a delightful and admirable thing when expressed to such purpose by such men.

And this poet is doubtless a man worthy of note and admiring remembrance. He stands apart among his fellows, without master or follower; he has learnt little from Shakespeare or Marlowe, Jonson or Fletcher. The other dramatists of the great age fall naturally into classes; thus, to take two of the greatest, Webster and Decker

both hold of Shakespeare; "The Duchess of Malfi" has a savour of his tragedies, "Old Fortunatus" of his romantic plays; not indeed so much by force of imitation as of affinity. These two poets were as gulfs or estuaries of the sea which is Shakespeare. In Decker's best work we feel an air of the "Winter's Tale" or "Midsummer Night's Dream;" in Webster's, of "Lear" and "Othello." Something of the April sweetness, the dew and breath of morning, which invests the pastoral and fairy world of the master, gives to the one pupil's work a not infrequent touch of delicate life and passionate grace; from the other we catch the echoes of his oceanic harmonies of terror and pity, the refractions of that lightning which strikes into sudden sight the very depths of action and suffering, the motive forces of utter love and hate. But the poetry of Ford is no branch or arm of that illimitable sea; it might rather be likened to a mountain lake shut in by solitary highlands, without visible outlet or inlet, seen fitlier by starlight than by sunlight; much such an one as the Lac de Gaube above Cauterets, steel-blue and sombre, with a strange attraction for the swimmer in its cold smooth reticence and breathless calm. For nothing is more noticeable in this poet than the passionless reason and equable tone of style with which in his greatest works he treats of the deepest and most fiery passions, the quiet eye with which he searches out the darkest issues of emotion, the quiet hand with which he notes them down. At all times his verse is even and regular, accurate and composed; never specially flexible or melodious, always admirable for precision, vigour, and purity.

The fame of Ford hangs mainly upon two great

tragedies, which happily are strong enough in structure to support a durable reputation. Two others among his plays are indeed excellent, and worthy a long life of honour; but among the mighty throng of poets then at work a leading place could hardly have been granted to the author only of "The Lover's Melancholy" and "Perkin Warbeck." To the author of "'Tis Pity She's a Whore" and "The Broken Heart" it cannot be refused.

It is somewhat unfortunate that the very title of Ford's masterpiece should sound so strangely in the ears of a generation "whose ears are the chastest part about them." For of these great twin tragedies the first-born is on the whole the greater. The subtleties and varieties of individual character do not usually lie well within the reach of Ford's handling; but in the part of Giovanni we find more of this power than elsewhere. Here the poet has put forth all his strength; the figure of his protagonist stands out complete and clear. There is more ease and life in it than in his other sculptures; though here as always Ford is rather a sculptor of character than a painter. But the completeness, the consistency of design is here all the worthier of remark, that we too often find this the most needful quality for a dramatist wanting in him as in other great writers of his time.

Giovanni is the student struck blind and mad by passion; in the uttermost depths of unimaginable crime he reflects, argues, reasons concerning the devils that possess him. In the only other tragedy of the time based on incestuous love, Massinger's "Unnatural Combat," the criminal is old and hardened, a soul steeped and tempered in sin, a man of blood and iron

from his youth upwards ; but upon Giovanni his own crime falls like a curse, sudden as lightning ; he stands before us as one plague-stricken in the prime of spiritual health, helpless under the lash of love as Canace or Myrrha, Phædra or Pasiphae. The curious interfusion of reason with passion makes him seem but the more powerless to resist, the more hopeless of recovery. His sister is perhaps less finely drawn, though her ebbs and flows of passion are given with great force, and her alternate possession by desire and terror, repentance and defiance, if we are sometimes startled by the rough rapidity of the change, does not in effect impair the unity of character, obscure the clearness of outline. She yields more readily than her brother to the curse of Venus, with a passionate pliancy which prepares us for her subsequent prostration of mind at the feet of her confessor, and again for the revival of a fearless and shameless spirit under the stroke of her husband's violence. Nothing can be finer than the touches which bring out the likeness and unlikeness of the two ; her fluctuation and his steadfastness, her ultimate repentance and his final impenitence. The sin once committed, there is no more wavering or flinching possible to him, who has fought so hard against the dæmoniac possession ; while she who resigned body and soul to the tempter almost at a word remains liable to the influences of religion and remorse. Of all the magnificent scenes which embody their terrible story the last is (as it should be) the most noble ; it is indeed the finest scene in Ford. Even the catastrophe of "The Broken Heart,"—that "transcendent scene," as Lamb justly called it—though

more overpoweringly effective in poetic mechanism and material conception, is less profoundly and subtly impressive. In Ford's best work we are usually conscious of a studious arrangement of emotion and expression, a steady inductive process of feeling as of thought, answering to the orderly measure of the verse. That swift and fiery glance which flashes at once from all depths to all heights of the human spirit, that intuition of an indefinable and infallible instinct which at a touch makes dark things clear and brings distant things close, is not a gift of his; perhaps Webster alone of English poets can be said to share it in some measure with Shakespeare. Bosola and Flamineo, Vittoria Corombona and the Duchess of Malfi, even Romelio and Leonora in that disjointed and chaotic play "The Devil's Law-case," good characters and bad alike, all have this mark upon them of their maker's swift and subtle genius; this sudden surprise of the soul in its remoter hiding-places at its most secret work. In a few words that startle as with a blow and lighten as with a flame, the naked natural spirit is revealed, bare to the roots of life. And this power Ford also has shown here at least; witness the passionate subtlety and truth of this passage, the deepest and keenest of his writing, as when taken with the context it will assuredly appear:—

> "*Annabella.* Be not deceived, my brother;
> This banquet is an harbinger of death
> To you and me; assure yourself it is,
> And be prepared to welcome it.
> *Giovanni.* Well, then:
> The schoolmen teach that all this globe of earth
> Shall be consumed to ashes in a minute.

Ann. So I have read too.
Gio. But 'twere somewhat strange
To see the waters burn; could I believe
This might be true, I could believe as well
There might be hell or heaven.
Ann. That's most certain.
Gio. A dream, a dream! else in this other world
We should know one another.
Ann. So we shall.
Gio. Have you heard so?"

All the horror of this wonderful scene is tempered into beauty by the grace and glow of tenderness which so suffuses it as to verify the vaunt of Giovanni—

"If ever after-times should hear
Of our fast-knit affections, though perhaps
The laws of conscience and of civil use
May justly blame us, yet when they but know
Our loves, that love will wipe away that rigour
Which would in other incests be abhorred.
Give me your hand; how sweetly life doth run
In these well-coloured veins! how constantly
These palms do promise health! but I could chide
With nature for this cunning flattery—
Kiss me again—forgive me."

The soft and fervent colour of Ford's style, the smooth and finished measure of his verse, never fail him throughout the nobler parts of this tragedy; but here as elsewhere we sometimes find, instead of these, a certain hardness of tone peculiar to him. The ferocious nakedness of reciprocal invective in the scene where Soranzo discovers the pregnancy of Annabella has no parallel in the works of his great compeers. M. Taine has translated the opening passages of that scene in the division of his history of English literature which treats of our great dramatists. He has done full justice to the

force and audacity of Ford's realism, which indeed he seems to rate higher than the depth and pathos, the sweet and subtle imagination, of other poets, if not than the more tender and gracious passages of Ford himself. He has dwelt, it appears to me, with especial care and favour upon three men of high genius, in all of whom this quality or this defect is conspicuous, of hardness too often deepening into brutality. A better and keener estimate of Ford, of Dryden, and of Swift can hardly be found than M. Taine's. Their vigorous and positive genius has an evident attraction for his critical spirit, which enjoys and understands the tangible and definable forces of mind, handles the hard outline, relishes the rough savour of the actual side of things with which strength of intellect rather than strength of imagination has to deal. As with Swift and Dryden among their fellows, so with Ford among his, the first great quality that strikes a student is the force of grasp, the precision of design, the positive and resolute touch with which all things are set down. A dramatic poet of Ford's high quality cannot of course be wanting in beauty and tenderness, in delicacy and elevation, unknown to men whose mightiest gift was that of noble satire, though the genius so applied were as deep and wide and keen, the spirit so put to service as swift and strong and splendid, as that of the two great men just mentioned. Not only the lovely lines above cited, but the very names of Calantha and Penthea, bear witness at once in our memory to the grace and charm of their poet's work at its best. The excess of tragic effect in his scenes, his delight in "fierce extremes" and volcanic eruptions of

character and event, have in the eyes of some critics obscured the milder side of his genius. They are not without excuse. No one who has studied Ford throughout with the care he demands and deserves can fail to feel the want of that sweet and spontaneous fluency which belongs to the men of Shakespeare's school—that bird-like note of passionate music which vibrates in their verse to every breath of joy or sorrow. There is something too much now and then of rule and line, something indeed of hard limitation and apparent rigidity of method. I say this merely by comparison; set against the dramatists of any later school, he will appear as natural and instinctive a singer as any bird of the Shakespearian choir. But of pure imagination, of absolute poetry as distinguished from intellectual force and dramatic ability, no writer of his age except Massinger has less. Yet they are both poets of a high class, dramatists of all but the highest. They both impress us with a belief in their painstaking method of work, in the care and conscience with which their scenes were wrought out. Neither Ford nor Massinger could have ventured to indulge in the slippery style and shambling license which we pardon in Decker for the sake of his lyric note and the childlike delicacy of his pathos, his tenderness of colour and his passionate fancy; nor could they have dared the risk of letting their plays drift loose and shift for themselves at large, making the best that might be made of such rough and unhewn plots as Cyril Tourneur's, Middleton's, or Chapman's—sustained and quickened by the unquenchable and burning fire, the bitter ardour and angry beauty of Tourneur's verse, the grace and force of Middleton's fluent and

exuberant invention, the weight of thought and grave resonance of Chapman's gnomic lines. They could not afford to let their work run wild; they were bound not to write after the erratic fashion of their time. All the work of Massinger, all the serious work of Ford, is the work of an artist who respects alike himself, his art, and the reader or spectator who may come to study it. There is scarcely another dramatic poet of their time for whom as much can be said. On the other hand, there is scarcely another dramatic poet of their time who had not more than they had of those "raptures" which "were all air and fire," of "that fine madness which rightly should possess a poet's brain." The just and noble eulogy of Drayton, though appropriate above all to the father of English tragedy, is applicable also more or less to the successors of Marlowe, as well as to the master of the "mighty line" himself. To Ford it is less appropriate; to Massinger it is not applicable at all. This is said out of no disrespect or ingratitude to that admirable dramatist, whose graver and lighter studies are alike full of interest and liberal of enjoyment; but the highest touch of imagination, the supreme rapture and passion of poetry, he has not felt, and therefore he cannot make us feel.

The story of Giovanni and Annabella was probably based either on fact or tradition; it may perhaps yet be unearthed in some Italian collection of tales after the manner of Cinthio and Bandello (with the tale of incest in Rosset's "Histoires Tragiques" it has little in common); but in spite of Ford's own assertion I am inclined to conjecture that the story sculptured with such noble skill and care in the scenes of "The Broken

Heart" was "all made out of the carver's brain." In no other play of Ford's are the subordinate figures so studiously finished. In the preceding play all the minor characters are mere outlines of ruffian or imbecile; here the poet has evidently striven to give fullness of form to all his conceptions, and fullness of life to all his forms. Ithocles, Orgilus, Bassanes, are as thoroughly wrought out as he could leave them; and in effect the triumphant and splendid ambition of the first, the sullen and subtle persistence of the second, the impure insanity and shameful agony of the third, are well relieved against each other, especially in those scenes where the brilliant youth of the hero is set side by side with the sombre youth of the man he has injured even to death. But here again the whole weight of the action hangs upon the two chief characters; Calantha and Penthea stand out alone clear in our memory for years after their story has been read. In no play or poem are two types of character more skilfully contrasted; and no poet ever showed a more singular daring than Ford in killing both heroines by the same death of moral agony. Penthea, the weaker and more womanish of the two, dies slowly, dissolves into death with tears and cries of loud and resentful grief; Calantha drops dead at the goal of suffering without a word, stabbed to the heart with a sudden silent sorrow. Of all last scenes on any stage, the last scene of this play is the most overwhelming in its unity of outward effect and inward impression. Other tragic poems have closed as grandly, with as much or more of moral and poetic force; none, I think, with such solemn power of spectacular and spiritual effect combined. As

a mere stage show it is so greatly conceived and so triumphantly wrought out, that even with less intense and delicate expression, with less elaborate and stately passion in the measure and movement of the words, it would stamp itself on the memory as a durable thing to admire; deep-based as it is on solemn and calm emotion, built up with choice and majestic verse, this great scene deserves even the extreme eulogy of its greatest critic.

The tragic genius of Ford takes a softer tone and more tender colour in "The Broken Heart" than in any of his other plays; except now and then in the part of Bassanes, there are no traces of the ferocity and brutality which mark in the tragedy preceding it such characters as Soranzo, Vasques, and Grimaldi. But here too there is something of Ford's severity, a certain rigid and elaborate precision of work, unlike the sweet seeming instinctiveness, the noble facility of manner and apparent impulse of gracious or majestic speech, which imbues and informs the very highest dramatic style; the quality which Marlowe and Shakespeare bequeathed to their successors, which kept fresh the verse of Beaumont and Fletcher despite its overmuch easiness and exuberance of mannerism, which gave life to the roughest outlines of Webster, Decker, Tourneur, which even Marston and Chapman, with all their faults of crudity and pedantry, showed when they had to rise to the height of any great and tragic argument. The same rigidity is noticeable to some extent in the characters: the marble majesty of Calantha is indeed noble and proper, and gives force and edge to the lofty passion of the catastrophe; but in Penthea too there is something over hard and severe;

we find a vein of harshness and bitterness in her angry grief which Shakespeare or indeed Webster would have tempered and sweetened. In the faultless and most exquisite scene where she commits to the princess her legacies of "three poor jewels," this bitterness disappears, and the sentiment is as delicate and just as the expression; while the gracious gentleness of Calantha gives a fresh charm of warmth and sympathy to her stately presence and office in the story. The quality of pity here made manifest in her brings her own after suffering within reach of our pity. Again, in the previous interview of Ithocles with Penthea, and above all in her delirious dying talk, there is real and noble pathos, though hardly of the most subtle and heart-piercing kind; and in the parts of Ithocles and Orgilus there is a height and dignity which ennoble alike the slayer and the slain. None could give this quality better than Ford: this, the most complete and equal of his works, is full of it throughout.

From the "high-tuned poem," as he justly calls it, which he had here put forth in evidence of his higher and purer part of power, the fall, or collapse rather, in his next work was singular enough. I trust that I shall not be liable to any charge of Puritan prudery though I avow that this play of "Love's Sacrifice" is to me intolerable. In the literal and genuine sense of the word, it is utterly indecent, unseemly and unfit for handling. The conception is essentially foul because it is essentially false; and in the sight of art nothing is so foul as falsehood. The incestuous indulgence of Giovanni and Annabella is not improper for tragic treatment; the obscene

abstinence of Fernando and Bianca is wholly improper. There is a coarseness of moral fibre in the whole work which is almost without parallel among our old poets. More than enough has been said of their verbal and spiritual license; but nowhere else, as far as I know, shall we find within the large limits of our early drama such a figure as Ford's Bianca set up for admiration as a pure and noble type of woman. For once, to my own wonder and regret, I find myself at one with the venomous moralist Gifford on a question of morals, when he observes of "that most innocent lady" that "she is, in fact, a gross and profligate adulteress, and her ridiculous reservations, while they mark her lubricity, only enhance her shame." The worst is, that we get no moment of relief throughout from the obtrusion of the very vilest elements that go to make up nature and deform it. No height or grandeur of evil is here to glorify, no aspiration or tenderness of afterthought is here to allay, the imbecile baseness, the paltry villainies and idiocies, of the "treacherous, lecherous, kindless" reptiles that crawl in and out before our loathing eyes. The language of course is in the main elaborate, pure, and forcible; the verse often admirable for its stately strength; but beyond this we can find nothing to plead in extenuation of uncleanness and absurdity. The only apparent aim of the quasi-comic interludes is to prove the possibility of producing something even more hateful than the tragic parts. The indecency of Ford's farcical underplots is an offence above all things to art. How it may seem from the preacher's point of view is no present concern of ours; perhaps he might find it by comparison harmless and

powerless, as assuredly it can attract or allure the intellect or the senses of no creature above the level of apes and swine; but in the artist's eyes it is insufferable and damnable. Without spirit, without humour, without grace, it encumbers the scene as with dried and congealed filth. In the face of much exquisite work of painter and sculptor, poet and humourist, which is anything but conventionally decent, we cannot allow that art must needs "lean to virtue's side," and lend her voice or hand to swell the verdict or prop the pulpit of judge or moralist; but two things she cannot away with; by the very law of her life, by the very condition of her being, she is bound to reject whatever is brutal, whatever is prurient; Swift cannot bend her to the worship of Cloacina, Moore cannot teach her the lisp and leer of his toad-faced Cupids. Great men may sin by mad violence and brutality, like that fierce world-satirist who stood out with lacerated heart against all bitterest infliction and "envious wrath of man or God," a Titan blasted by the fires but not beaten by the strokes of heaven; but small men only can teach their tongues the tittering accent of a vicious valet, the wriggling prurience of such lackey's literature as is handed round on a salver to the patrons of drawing-room rhymesters and ante-chamber witlings. Ford was a poet, and a poet of high mark; he could not therefore, even in a meaner age, have learnt the whimper or the smirk of sentimental or jocose prurience; he could never have submitted to ignoble handling the sweet or bitter emotions and passions of sense or spirit; all torture and all rapture of the flesh or of the soul he would always have treated with the frank and serious freedom

of the artist, never with the bragging and simpering petulance of the social poetaster and parasitic plagiarist; but the other inadmissible thing he has too often admitted within the precinct of his work. The dull brutality of his lame and laborious farce is a fault quite unlike the faults of his fellows; his cold and dry manner makes his buffoonery at once rancid and insipid; while the "bluff beastliness" of Jonson's plebeian part, the overflowing and boyish wantonness of Fletcher, the foul-mouthed fidelity of Decker's transcripts from the low life of his period, even the rank breadth of Marston's shameless satire, may admit of excuse in the sight of art, the pointless and spiritless license of Ford's attempts at comedy can be neither honourably excused nor reasonably explained. Of Shakespeare alone we can be sure that no touch is wrong, no tone too broad, no colour too high for the noble and necessary purposes of his art; but of his followers, if excuse be needed for their errors and excesses, the most may plead in palliation either the height of spirits and buoyancy of blood, or the passion of a fierce sincerity, or the force and flavour of strong comic genius, or the relief given by contrast to the high pure beauty of the main work; all alike may plead the freedom of the time, the freshness of young life and energy of the dawn, working as they did when the art was new-born, too strong a child of earth and heaven and too joyous to keep always a guard on its ways and words, to walk always within bounds and speak always within compass. But Ford is no poetic priest or spiritual witness against evil, whose lips have been touched with the live coal of sacred satire, and set on fire of angry prophecy; the

wrath and scorn of Jonson, the rage of Tourneur and the bitterness of Marston, find in him no echo of response; and of the bright sweet flow and force of life which feed as from a springing fountain the joyful genius of Beaumont and Fletcher, of the gladness and grace of that wild light Muse who sings "as if she would never grow old," whether her song be of men's joy or sorrow, he has nothing to show in excuse of worse faults than theirs; with him

> "The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
> And waits upon the judgment."

Massinger has been accused of the same dull and deliberate license of speech; but Massinger, though poor in verbal wit, had a strong and grave humour, an occasional breadth and warmth of comic invention, which redeems his defects or offences. Hartley Coleridge, in his notice of the two poets, says that Massinger would have been the dullest of all bad jokers, had not Ford contrived to be still duller. But Massinger, if not buoyant and brilliant as Fletcher, or rich with the spiritual wealth and strong with the gigantic thews of Jonson, has his own place of honour in pure as well as mixed comedy; Belgarde, Justice Greedy, Borachia, and others, are worthy to stand, in their lower line of humour, below the higher level of such studies as Overreach and Luke; whereas, if Ford's lighter characters are ever inoffensive for a moment, it is all that can be said of them, and more than could be hoped. The strength and intensity of his genius require a tragic soil to flourish in, an air of tragedy to breathe; its lightning is keenest where the night of emotion and event is

darkest in which it moves and works. In romantic drama or mixed comedy it shines still at times with a lambent grace and temperance of light; but outside the limit of serious thought and feeling it is quenched at once, and leaves but an unsavoury fume behind. Even in those higher latitudes the moral air is not always of the clearest; the sanctity of Giovanni's confessor, for example, has something of the compliant quality of Bianca's virtue; it sits so loosely and easily on him that, fresh from the confession of Annabella's incest, he assists in plighting her hand to Soranzo, and passing off on the bridegroom as immaculate a woman whom he knows to be with child by her brother; and this immediately after that most noble scene in which the terror and splendour of his rebuke has bowed to the very dust before him the fair face and the ruined soul of his penitent. After this we cannot quite agree with Macaulay that Ford has in this play "assigned a highly creditable part to the friar;" but certainly he has the most creditable part there is to play; and as certainly he was designed on the whole for a type of sincere and holy charity. The jarring and startling effect of such moral discords weakens the poet's hold on the reader by the shock they give to his faith and sympathy. Beaumont and Fletcher have sinned heavily in the same way; and the result is that several of their virtuous characters are more really and more justly offensive to the natural sense, more unsavoury to the spiritual taste, than any wantonness of words or extravagance of action can make their representative figures of vice.

In the gallery of Ford's works, as in the gallery of

Webster's, there is one which seems designed as a sample of regular and classic form, a sedate study after a given model. Ford's "Perkin Warbeck" holds the same place on his stage as "Appius and Virginia" does on Webster's. In both plays there is a perfect unity of action, a perfect straightforwardness of design; all is clear, orderly, direct to the point; there is no outgrowth or overgrowth of fancy, there are no byways of poetry to divert the single progress of the story. By the side of "The Duchess of Malfi" or "The Broken Heart" they look rigid and bare. Both are noble works; Webster's has of course the more ardour and vehemence of power, Ford's has perhaps the more completeness of stage effect and careful composition. The firmness and fidelity of hand with which his leading characters are drawn could only be shown by a dissection of the whole play scene by scene. The simple and lofty purity of conception, the exact and delicate accuracy of execution, are alike unimpaired by any slip or flaw of judgment or of feeling. The heroic sincerity of Warbeck, his high courtesy and constancy, his frank gratitude and chivalrous confidence, give worthy proof of Ford's ability to design a figure of stainless and exalted presence; the sad strong faith of his wife, the pure and daring devotion of the lover who has lost her, the petulant and pathetic pride of her father, all melted at last into stately sympathy and approval of her truth in extremity of trial; and, more than all these, the noble mutual recognition and regard of Warbeck and Dalyell in the time of final test; are qualities which raise this drama to the highest place among its compeers for moral tone and effect. The two kings are faithful and forcible studies;

the smooth resolute equanimity and self-reliant craft of the first Tudor sets off the shallow chivalry and passionate unstable energy of the man of Flodden. The insolent violence of constraint put upon Huntley in the disposal of his daughter's hand is of a piece with the almost brutal tone of contempt assumed towards Warbeck, when he begins to weary of supporting the weaker cause for the mere sake of magnanimous display and irritable self-assertion. His ultimate dismissal of the star-crossed pretender is "perfect Stuart" in its bland abnegation of faith and the lofty courtliness of manner with which engagements are flung over and pledges waved aside; whether intentionally or not, Ford has touched off to the life the family habit of repudiation, the hereditary faculty of finding the most honourable way to do the most dishonourable things. Nor is the other type of royalty less excellently real and vivid; the mixture of warmth and ceremony in Katherine's reception by Henry throws into fresh and final relief the implacable placidity of infliction with which he marks her husband for utmost ignominy of suffering.

Of imaginative beauty and poetic passion this play has nothing; but for noble and equable design of character it stands at the head of Ford's works. There is no clearer example in our literature of the truth of the axiom repeated by Mr. Arnold from the teaching of the supreme Greek masters, that "all depends upon the subject." There are perhaps more beautiful lines in "Love's Sacrifice" than in "Perkin Warbeck;" yet the former play is utterly abortive and repulsive, a monument of discomfiture and discredit, as the latter of noble aim

and noble success. It is the one high sample of historic drama produced between the age of Shakespeare and our own; the one intervening link—a link of solid and durable metal—which connects the first and the latest labours in that line of English poetry; the one triumphant attempt to sustain and transmit the tradition of that great tragic school founded by Marlowe, perfected by Shakespeare, revived by the author of "Philip van Artevelde." The central figure of Ford's work is not indeed equal in stature of spirit and strength of handling to the central figure of Sir Henry Taylor's; there is a broader power, a larger truth, in the character of Artevelde than in the character of Warbeck; but the high qualities of interest based on firm and noble grounds, of just sentiment and vital dignity, of weight, force, and exaltation of thought, shown rather in dramatic expansion and development of lofty character by lofty method than in scenes and passages detachable from the context as samples of reflection and expression—these are in great measure common to both poets. Ford, again, has the more tender and skilful hand at drawing a woman; his heroines make by far the warmer and sharper impression on us; this on the whole is generally his strongest point, as it is perhaps the other's weakest; while, though we may not think his female studies up to the mark of his male portraits, there is certainly no English dramatist since Shakespeare who can be matched as a student of men, comparable for strong apprehension and large heroic grasp of masculine character, with the painter of Comnenus, of Artevelde, and of Dunstan.

The three romantic comedies of Ford have the same

qualities and shortcomings in common ; they are studious and often elegant in style, sometimes impressive or at least effective in incident, generally inadequate to the chance of excellence offered by the subject ; not so much through careless laxity and incoherence—for the sign of labour and finish is visible upon each ; they have evidently been wrought up to the height and fullness of his design—as through a want of constructive power and mastery of his own conceptions. "The Lover's Melancholy" is the best of the three, as having the best things in it ; two of these are exquisite ; the well-known episode of the lute-player and nightingale, and the reunion of Palador and Eroclea. There are touches of power and tenderness in the part of Meleander, and the courtship of Parthenophil by Thamasta is gracefully and skilfully managed, without violence or offence. The winding-up of a story ill and feebly conducted through the earlier parts of the play is far more dexterous and harmonious than its development ; and this is about all that need be said of it. Between the two beautiful versions of Strada's pretty fable by Ford and Crashaw there will always be a diversity of judgment among readers ; some must naturally prefer the tender fluency and limpid sweetness of Ford, others the dazzling intricacy and affluence in refinements, the supple and cunning implication, the choiceness and subtlety of Crashaw.

Something better than Ford has left us might have been made of "The Fancies Chaste and Noble" and "The Lady's Trial." In the former play the character of Flavia is admirably conceived ; there were excellent

possibilities of interest and pathos in her part, and her first interview with the husband who had sold and discarded her under cover of a lie gives promise that something will come of these chances; but in effect they come to nothing; the tragic effect of the position is evaded, the force of the conception diluted, the outlines of character slurred and effaced. Again, we are led to look for more than we get from the scenes of Castamela's mock temptation and seeming peril, from her grave and confident dignity in face of trial, and the spirit with which she assumes a lifelike mask of haughty and corrupt levity to punish the reckless weakness of a brother who has wantonly exposed her to apparent danger; but all ends in futile surprise and flat insufficiency. Livio and Romanello, the brothers of the heroines, are figures too dull and feeble to rouse any stronger feeling than a dull and feeble curiosity to see how they will slip or slink out of situations which might have been full of spirit and interest. The remaining characters are colourless and formless. Of the brutal and brainless interludes of farce I have no more to say than has been said above. With more force and harmony of character the finest occasion in the play might have been put to admirable use; when Livio, in hopes to rescue his sister from shame, offers her hand to the suitor whom he formerly rejected, and finds her in turn refused by Romanello on suspicion of dishonour incurred through her brother's baseness. The presence and intercession of Romanello's own sister, herself newly and nobly vindicated in his eyes and reconciled to his love, should have added to the living

interest of the scene; but between curtailed plot and truncated underplot all such possible interest has long since been stifled.

The same waste or misuse of good material has marred the promise of a better play in "The Lady's Trial." This should have been an excellent example of romantic or serious comedy; had Ford been content thoroughly to work out the characters of Auria, his wife, and her kinsman, he must have given us again a study of high and delicate moral beauty, a group worthy to stand beside the noble triad of Warbeck, Katherine, and Dalyell; but as it is, shackled perhaps by a fear of repeating himself, he has missed or thrown away this chance also. The one scene in which the spotless and hopeless chivalry of Malfato's love for his kinswoman is brought into action comes too late in the play and too suddenly to make its effect. There are two or three passages of admirable energy and pathos in the part of Auria; but the upshot of all is again ineffective; the evolution of the main story is clogged and trammelled by the utterly useless and pointless episode of Adurni's cast mistress, her senseless schemes of love and revenge, her equivocal reformation and preposterous remarriage. All this encumbrance of rubbish has absolutely no excuse, no aim or reason of any kind; it serves merely to hamper the development and distort the progress of the play, leaving no room or time for the action to expand naturally and move smoothly forward to a consistent end. The underplot of Hippolita's attempted revenge on the lover who has discarded her is neither beautiful nor necessary to the main action of "'Tis Pity She's a Whore;" but it is

skilfully wrought in, and so far serviceable that it effectually cuts off Soranzo's chance of arousing such interest or sympathy as might divert the reader's mind from the central figures of Giovanni and Annabella; in this case the discarded adulteress and her cast-off husband are mere worthless impediments which subserve no end whatever.

Of the two plays which bear conjointly the names of Ford and Decker, "The Sun's Darling" is evidently, as Gifford calls it, a "piece of patchwork" hastily stitched up for some momentary purpose; I suspect that the two poets did not work together on it, but that our present text is merely a recast by Ford of an earlier masque by Decker; probably, as Mr. Collier has suggested, his lost play of "Phaëton," for which we might be glad to exchange the "loop'd and window'd nakedness" of this ragged version. In those parts which are plainly remnants of Decker's handiwork there are some scattered lines of great sweetness, such as these of lament for the dead spring:—

> "How cool wert thou in anger! in thy diet
> How temperate and yet sumptuous! thou wouldst not waste
> *The weight of a sad violet* in excess,
> Yet still thy board had dishes numberless;
> Dumb beasts even lovèd thee; once a young lark
> Sat on thy hand, and gazing on thine eyes
> Mounted and sang, thinking them moving skies."

For the latter scenes, as Gifford observes, it is clear that Ford is in the main responsible; the intrusion in the fifth act of political satire and adulation is singularly perverse and infelicitous. In the opening scene, also, between Raybright and the Priest of the Sun, I recognise

the moral tone and metrical regulation of Ford's verse. Whatever the original may have been—and it was probably but a thin and hasty piece of work—it has doubtless suffered from the incongruous matter loosely sewn on to it; and the masque as it stands is too lax and incoherent in structure to be worth much as a sample of its slight kind, or to show if there was anything of more significance or value in the first conception.

"The Witch of Edmonton" is a play of rare beauty and importance both on poetical and social grounds. It is perhaps the first protest of the stage against the horrors and brutalities of vulgar superstition; a protest all the more precious for the absolute faith in witchcraft and devilry which goes hand in hand with compassion for the instruments as well as the victims of magic. Dr. Theodorus Plönnies himself had not a heartier belief in the sorceries of Sidonia von Bork than the poets appear to have in the misdeeds of Mother Sawyer; while neither Meinhold nor any modern writer has shown a nobler abhorrence of the genuinely hellish follies and cruelties which brought forth in natural and regular order fresh crops of witches to torture and burn. Even Victor Hugo could hardly show a more tender and more bitter pity for the sordid and grovelling agonies of outcast old age and reprobate misery, than that which fills and fires the speech of the wretched hag from the first scene where she appears gathering sticks to warm herself, starved, beaten, lamed and bent double with blows, pitiable and terrible in her fierce abjection, to the last moment when she is led to execution through the roar of the rabble. In all this part of the play I trace the hand of Decker;

his intimate and familiar science of wretchedness, his great and gentle spirit of compassion for the poor and suffering with whom his own lot in life was so often cast, in prison and out. The two chief soliloquies of Mother Sawyer, her first and last invocations of the familiar, are noble samples of his passionate dramatic power; their style has a fiery impulse and rapidity quite unlike the usual manner of his colleague. Gifford was probably right in assigning to Ford the whole of the first act; there is no more admirable exposition of a play on the English stage; the perfect skill and the straightforward power with which the plan of the story is opened and the interest of the reader fixed are made the more evident by the direct simplicity of method and means used. Ford, therefore, must have the credit of first bringing forward two of the main characters in the domestic tragedy which makes up the better part of this composite play; and the introduction of Frank and Winnifrede gives ominous and instant promise of the terror and pathos of their after story. The part of Susan is one of Decker's most beautiful and delicate studies; in three short scenes he has given an image so perfect in its simple sweetness as hardly to be overmatched outside the gallery of Shakespeare's women. The tender freshness of his pathos, its plain frank qualities of grace and strength, never showed themselves with purer or more powerful effect than here; the after scene where Frank's guilt is discovered has the same force and vivid beauty. The interview of Frank with the disguised Winnifrede in this scene may be compared by the student of dramatic style with the parting of the same characters at the close; the one has all the

poignant simplicity of Decker, the other all the majestic energy of Ford. The rough buffoonery and horseplay of the clown and the familiar we may probably set down to Decker's account; there is not much humour or meaning in it, but it is livelier and less offensive than most of Ford's attempts in that line. The want of connection between the two subjects of the play, Mother Sawyer's witchcraft and Frank Thorney's bigamy, is a defect common to many plays of the time, noble sketches of rough and rapid workmanship; but in this case the tenuity of the connecting link is such that despite the momentary intervention of her familiar the witch is able with perfect truth to disclaim all complicity with the murderer. Such a communion of guilt might easily have been managed, and the tragic structure of the poem would have been complete in harmony of interest.

No words need here be wasted on any verse of Ford's outside the range of his dramatic work; and of his two pamphlets in prose the first is an ephemeral and official piece of compliment, somewhat too dull and stiff in style to be a truly graceful offering "in honour of all fair ladies." The second "handful of discourse" has rather more worth and dignity of moral eloquence. The examples chosen from his own age for praise or blame add some historical interest to his axioms and arguments; the sketch of Raleigh, unhappily imperfect as it is, seems from the fragment left us to have given a vigorous and discerning estimate of "a man known and well deserving to be known." The reader of this treatise will remark, with such comic or tragic reflections as he may find appropriate, the passage in which Ford—having discussed and

dismissed as inadequate such minor epithets of eulogy as "the Peaceable," "the Learned," and even "the Great" —finally and emphatically bestows on the yet living majesty of England the surname for all time of James the Good. The poet is so emphatic in his disclaimer of "servility or insinuation" that we might imagine him writing with an eye to the reversion of Jonson's laurel.

"Ford was of the first order of poets:" such is the verdict of his earliest and greatest critic. To differ from Lamb on a matter of judgment relating to any great name of the English drama is always hazardous; it is a risk never to be lightly run, never to be incurred without grave reluctance; and to undervalue so noble a poet as Ford, a very early and close favourite of my own studies, must be even further from my wish than to depreciate the value of such a verdict in his favour. Yet perhaps it would be more accurate to say merely that his good qualities are also great qualities—that whenever his work is good it is greatly good—than to say that he was altogether one of the few greatest among great men who stand in that very first order of poets. Thus much assuredly we may admit with all confidence and gladness of gratitude; that the merits he has are merits of the first order. What these merits are no student of his poetry can fail to see. As to their kind there can be no dispute; as to the relative height of rank to which they suffice of themselves to raise a poet, there may be. They are not outward or superficial qualities; a somewhat more liberal sprinkling of these would have relieved and brightened the sombre beauties of his work. His power as a poet is simply a moral power; fancy he has none, and

imagination only strong to deal with tragic sentiment and situation ; strong to dive and keen to peer into depths of emotion and recesses of endurance "dove il sol tace," not swift or light of wing, not vast or etherial of flight, not lustrous or various of plumage ; but piercing and intense of sight, steady and sure of stroke, solemn and profound of strain. He gains strength with the strength of his subject ; he wants deep water to swim well. The moral nature with which he is fittest to deal must be large enough to dare or to bear things beyond all common measure ; resolute for any deed or any doom. Within the usual scope of action or the ordinary limit of suffering the energy of his spirit has hardly free play. In the hard cast and sombre loneliness of this energy he resembles Byron on one side—the outer side rather than the inner faculty ; though there is in both the same fixity and insistence of purpose, the same solitary and brooding weight of will, the same lurid force and singleness of mind. In light, imagination, musical instinct, and all qualities of poetry pure and simple, both are alike below the higher order of poets ; in the verse of neither is there that instant and sensible melody which comes only of a secret and sovereign harmony of the whole nature, and which comes of it inevitably and unmistakeably.

We often see the names of Webster and Ford bracketed as equal and parallel examples of the same kind or school of poets ; to me these two great men seem to belong to wholly different orders ; I should no more venture to set Ford by the side of Webster than Byron by the side of Shelley. If not altogether as great in degree, the difference is assuredly the same in kind. On this as on

all grounds we must keenly regret the loss of the one play known to us by name in which the diverse forces of these poets were united in the treatment of a subject unsurpassable for terror and tragic suggestion. To trace the points of likeness and unlikeness, to distinguish the lineaments of either man's genius, to note their various handling of an actual and recent tragedy so fearfully fertile of dramatic possibilities, of dark and splendid studies, for a spirit of strength to support them; to measure by the terrible capacities of the workmen the terrible capabilities of their material; to divide in our minds feature from feature, comparing line with line and tone with tone; this would have been a study of greater profit and delight to the student of their art than the comparison we had lately occasion to make between Ford and Decker. For, though dissimilar in kind as well as in degree, there are points of resemblance between Webster and Ford, especially in bias of mind and aim of contemplation, in choice of matter and sympathy of interest, which may well bring them together in our thoughts and set them by themselves apart; so that we can conceive of them working together on a poem which when complete should show no signs of incongruity, nothing inharmonious or incoherent; as we certainly could not conceive of Shelley and Byron. For the rest, though there may be some community of poetic powers and poetic deficiencies between Byron and Ford, neither has any of the other's highest quality; the emotion shot through with satire, the ardour inwoven with humour, which heighten and sharpen each other in the keenest and loftiest work of Byron, were as unknown to Ford as

the truth of deep human passion, the fire that labours without open rage or fury of flame at the heart's root and centre of life itself, the ravage of spiritual waste and agony of travail consuming and exhausting the very nature of the soul, which find shape and speech in the tragic verse of Ford, were beyond the dramatic reach of Byron. Of all men of genius Ford was probably the worst jester and Byron the worst playwright that ever lived. The living spirit of wit, its poetic and imaginative power, the force and ease of its action, the variety of thought and form into which it enters to fill them with life, never had a medium of expression comparable to the verse of Byron; in this, the compound and complex product of serious and humorous energy, rather than in power of any simple kind, lay the depth and width of his genius. Ford's dominion was limited to one simple form of power, the knowledge and mastery of passion properly so called, the science of that spiritual state in which the soul suffers force from some dominant thought or feeling. The pain and labour of such imperious possession, the strife and violence of a nature divided against itself, the strong anguish and the strong delight of extremities, gave the only fit field for his work and the only fruitful pasture for his thought. His imperative and earnest genius stamped and burnt itself into the figures and events of his plays: his mark is set ineffaceably on characters and circumstances, the sign-manual of his peculiar empire. Now, of passion proper Byron has nothing; the one radical emotion in him, deep as life and strong as death, is that noble ardour of rage and scorn which lifts his satire into sublimity; otherwise his passion is skin-deep;

all his love-making, from the first desire to the final satiety, may be summed up in that famous axiom of Chamfort which Alfred de Musset, his female page or attendant dwarf, prefixed as a label to one of his decoctions of watered Byronism. Whatever he may have known of passion, he could put into verse of a genuine kind nothing beyond the range of the greater cynic's memorable definition; if he tries to go further or deeper, his verse rings hollow, his hold grows feeble, his colouring false and his tone inflated. *Facit indignatio versum*, and admirably too; the strength and splendour of his wrath give to his denunciations of tyranny a stronger and sincerer life than we find in his invocations to patriotism; in him Apollo was incarnate only as the dragon-slayer: he might stand so in sculpture with King George for Python, his arrow still quivering in the royal carrion. Of all divine labours that was the one which fell to his share of work; of all the god his master's gifts that was the one allotted him. But for positive passion, for that absolute fusion of the whole nature in one fire of sense and spirit which only the great dramatic students and masters of man can give or comprehend, we must go to poets of another kind. These have flesh and blood, muscle and nerve enough in all conscience; but passion with them means something beyond "*l'échange de deux fantaisies et le contact de deux épidermes*;" they want all that and more as fuel for their fires; they deal neither with soulless bodies nor with bodiless souls. Among them Ford must always hold a place of high honour. Two at least, yet perhaps only two, of his great fellow tragedians —for Shakespeare is of no fellowship—were certainly, in

my judgment, poets of higher race and rarer quality. These two were Marlowe and Webster. The founder of our tragedy has in his best verse all the light and music and colour proper to the dawn of so divine a day as opened with his sunrise; and in Webster there is so much of the godhead which put on perfect humanity in Shakespeare alone, that it would scarcely be more rational to couple for comparison "The Broken Heart" with "The Duchess of Malfi" than "The Duchess of Malfi" with "King Lear." In one point Ford is excelled by others also of his age. As a lyric poet he is not quite of the highest class in that great lyrical school. Not that his few lyrics are unworthy the praise they have before now received; the best of them, such as the noble dirge which signals with its majesty of music the consummation of Calantha's agony, have an august beauty and dignity of their own. The verse has a marble stateliness and solidity; the grave and even measure carries weight and sufficiency with it; but the pure lyric note is not in this poet. He has no such outbreaks of birdlike or godlike song as Shakespeare's—

> "Roses, their sharp spines being gone -"

or Fletcher's—

> "Hear, ye ladies that despise—"

or Webster's—

> "Hark, now everything is still—"

or Decker's—

> "Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?"

After any of these the lyric verse of Ford strikes us as

verse ruled out in hard and rigid lines; yet is it excellent in its kind, and contemporary dramatists of high rank and repute have never come near its excellence; witness Massinger, the worst song-writer of them all.

Upon the whole then we find ample reason to assign high rank in the highest school of tragedy to this poet. Decker, with all his sweetness of natural passion, his tenderness of moral music and freshness of pathetic power, has left no work of such tragic strength and scope, such firmness of line and clearness of composition, such general height and equality of poetic worth, as the two masterpieces of Ford. Had Marston oftener written at his best, he might have matched Ford on his own ground of energetic intensity and might of moral grasp, while excelling him in the depth and delicacy of keen rare touches or flashes of subtle nature, such as his famous epithet of "the shuddering morn," and other fine thoughts of colour and strokes of pensive passion; but Marston almost always wrote very much below his best. The character of Andrugio in "Antonio and Mellida" is magnificent; but this grand figure is unequally sustained by the others; and superb as the part is throughout, one part can no more make a play than one swallow can make a summer; not though that part were Hamlet. Set among mean and discordant figures, without support or relief, the part of Hamlet, the greatest single work of man, would not of itself suffice to make a play. The noble thought and the noble verse of Marston are never fitly framed and chased; lying imbedded as his best work does in meaner matter, it cannot hold its own when set beside the work of men who could cut as well as unearth a jewel. The pure

simplicity of Heywood, his homely and lively fertility of invention, his honest pathos and gentleness of feeling, give a real charm to his sweet and clear flow of plain verse, but not weight and force enough to support the fame of a tragic poet of the first rank. Middleton had more facility and freedom of hand, less height and concentration of mind, than Ford; Massinger had far more fluency, regularity, and variety of interest, but far less tragic depth and directness of force. Chapman's plays, overweighted with thoughtful and majestic eloquence, sink down and break short under the splendid burden, or wander into empty lands and among rocky places of barren declamation; as a tragic artist he must give place to lesser men. With a far more genuinely dramatic gift, the fiery spirit of Cyril Tourneur lived and laboured in such a tempest that his work, so to speak, is blown out of all shape; the burning blast of his genius rages without intermission at such stormy speed along such wild wastes of tragedy that we have hardly time to note the fresh beauty of a rare oasis here and there; but for keenness and mastery of passionate expression in sublime and sonorous verse he can hardly be overmatched: while for single lines of that intense and terrible beauty which makes incision in the memory, there is none, after Shakespeare, to compare with him but Webster; the grandest verses of Marston or Chapman, both great in their use of deep and ardent words to give life and form to moral passion, have less of cautery in their stroke. Against his tragedies as against theirs the charge of excess and violence may be fairly brought, and the brand of such epithets as "spasmodic" and "horrible" may be set

on their choice and composition of incidents; though the pure and strong limpidity of Tourneur's style is never broken into the turbid froth and turgid whirlpools of tortuous rant which here and there convulse and deface the vigorous currents of Chapman's and Marston's. But the application of any such stigmatic phrase to the work of Webster is absurd. If it be true that his tragedies exemplify the old distinction of horrible from terrible, it must be as superb instances of terrible beauty undeformed by horrible detail. There is no such scene or incident in his two great plays as the blinding of Gloster in "King Lear;" nothing from which the physical sense recoils with such a shudder of instant sickness; nothing defensible only on the ground that where all scenes are terrible to the utmost limit that art can endure, one scene among them may be for once allowed to be simply horrible. Defensible or not, the license was claimed and the experiment made by Shakespeare, and not by Webster. Nor, again, are any of the lesser poet's characters so liable to the charge of monstrous or abnormal excess as the figures of Goneril and Regan; the wickedness of his worst villain never goes beyond the mark of Edmund's. To vindicate the comparative moderation of Webster's moral painting is not to impugn in any least degree the rectitude of Shakespeare's; but it is absurd for those who see no excess of horror in the incidents or of criminality in the characters of the master poet to impeach the greatest of his disciples for the exercise of much less liberty in his handling of criminal and terrible matter. Simplicity and purity mark the most tragic scenes and figures of Webster, not less than sublimity and sweetness. Nothing on a first

study of "The Duchess of Malfi" makes deeper impression on a capable student than this negative quality of noble abstinence, the utter and most admirable absence of any chaotic or spasmodic element, the chastity of a controlling instinct which rejects as impossible all hollow extravagance and inflation, "even in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) the whirlwind of passion." For one instance, if the comparison is to be made, we cannot but see that the curse of the Duchess on her brothers is less intemperate in the excess and exaltation of its rage than the curse of Lear on his daughters; which of course is as it should be, but is not what the general verdict of critics on Webster's art and style would have led us to expect. The note of extravagance is far more real and far more patent in the tragic genius of Beaumont and Fletcher. Of their comic power there is here no more question than of Jonson's or Massinger's or any other's; we are concerned merely to examine by comparison the rank among tragic poets of a poet who was nothing if not tragic. In this field, then, we find "those suns of glory, those two lights of men," the Dioscuri of our "heaven of invention," to be swifter and gracefuller runners than Ford, but neither surer of foot nor stronger of hand. Their genius has more of flame and light, less of fire and intensity; more of air and ease, less of force and concentration; more of beautiful and graceful qualities, less of positive and severe capacity; there is more of a charm about it, and less of a spell. With all its great and affluent beauties, "The Maid's Tragedy" leaves a less absolute and inevitable mark upon the mind of a student than "The Broken Heart." No poet is less

forgetable than Ford; none fastens (as it were) the fangs of his genius and his will more deeply in your memory. You cannot shake hands with him and pass by; you cannot fall in with him and out again at pleasure; if he touch you once he takes you, and what he takes he keeps his hold of; his work becomes part of your thought and parcel of your spiritual furniture for ever; he signs himself upon you as with a seal of deliberate and decisive power. His force is never the force of accident; the casual divinity of beauty which falls as though direct from heaven upon stray lines and phrases of some poets falls never by any such heavenly chance on his; his strength of impulse is matched by his strength of will; he never works more by instinct than by resolution; he knows what he would have and what he will do, and gains his end and does his work with full conscience of purpose and insistence of design. By the might of a great will seconded by the force of a great hand he won the place he holds against all odds of rivalry in a race of rival giants. In that gallery of monumental men and mighty memories, among or above the fellows of his godlike craft, the high figure of Ford stands steadily erect; his name is ineffaceable from the scroll of our great writers; it is one of the loftier landmarks of English poetry.

NOTES ON DESIGNS OF THE OLD MASTERS AT FLORENCE.

In the spring of 1864 I had the chance of spending many days in the Uffizj on the study of its several collections. Statues and pictures I found ranged and classed, as all the world knows they are, with full care and excellent sense; but one precious division of the treasury was then, and I believe is still, unregistered in catalogue or manual. The huge mass of original designs, in pencil or ink or chalk, swept together by Vasari and others, had then been but recently unearthed and partially assorted. Under former Tuscan governments this sacred deposit had lain unseen and unclassed in the lower chambers of the palace, heaped and huddled in portfolios by the loose stackful. A change of rule had put the matter at length into the hands of official men gifted with something more of human reason and eyesight. Three rooms were filled with the select flower of the collection acquired and neglected by past Florentine governors. Each design is framed, glazed, labelled legibly outside with the designer's name: the arrangement is not too far from perfect for convenience of study. As there can be no collection of the kind more rich, more various, more singular in interest, I supplied for myself the want of a

register by taking hasty memorial notes of all the important designs as they fell in my way. They are not ranged in any order of time, nor are all a painter's drawings kept together; some have samples scattered about various corners of different rooms, but all accessible and available. Space even there is bounded, and valued accordingly. In the under chambers there still remain piles of precious things but partially set in order. To these the public visitor has not access; but through the courtesy of their guardian I was offered admission and shown by him through the better part. There are many studies of the figure by Andrea del Sarto which deserve and demand a public place; others also of interest which belong to the earlier Florentine school; many nameless but some recognisable by a student of that time of art. In such studies as these the collection is naturally richest; though, as will at once be seen, not poor in samples of Milanese or Venetian work. The fruitful vigour, the joyous and copious effusion of spirit and labour, which makes all early times of awakening art dear to all students and profitable to all, has left noble fragments and relics behind, the golden gleanings of a full harvest. In these desultory notes I desire only to guide the attention to what seems worthiest of notice, without more form of order than has been given by the framers and hangers; taking men and schools as they come to hand, giving precedence and prominence only to the more precious and significant. For guide I have but my own sense of interest and admiration; so that, while making the list of things remarkable as complete and careful as I can, I have aimed at nothing further than to cast into some

legible form my impression of the designs registered in so rough and rapid a fashion; and shall begin my transcript with notices of such as first caught and longest fixed my attention.

Of Leonardo the samples are choice and few; full of that indefinable grace and grave mystery which belong to his slightest and wildest work. Fair strange faces of women full of dim doubt and faint scorn; touched by the shadow of an obscure fate; eager and weary as it seems at once, pale and fervent with patience or passion; allure and perplex the eyes and thoughts of men. There is a study here of Youth and Age meeting; it may be, of a young man coming suddenly upon the ghostly figure of himself as he will one day be; the brilliant life in his face is struck into sudden pallor and silence, the clear eyes startled, the happy lips confused. A fair straight-featured face, with full curls fallen or blown against the eyelids; and confronting it, a keen, wan, mournful mask of flesh: the wise ironical face of one made subtle and feeble by great age. The vivid and various imagination of Leonardo never fell into a form more poetical than in this design. Grotesques of course are not wanting; and there is a noble sketch of a griffin and lion locked or dashed together in the hardest throes of a final fight, which is full of violent beauty; and again, a study of the painter's chosen type of woman: thin-lipped, with a forehead too high and weighty for perfection or sweetness of form; cheeks exquisitely carved, clear pure chin and neck, and grave eyes full of a cold charm; folded hands, and massive hair gathered into a net; shapely and splendid, as a study for Pallas or Artemis.

Here, as in his own palace and wherever in Florence the shadow of his supreme presence has fallen and the mark of his divine hand been set, the work of Michel Angelo for a time effaces all thought of other men or gods. Before the majesty of his imperious advent the lesser kings of time seem as it were men bidden to rise up from their thrones, to cover their faces and come down. Not gratitude, not delight, not sympathy, is the first sense excited in one suddenly confronted with his designs; fear rather, oppressive reverence, and well-nigh intolerable adoration. Their tragic beauty, their inexplicable strength and wealth of thought, their terrible and exquisite significance, all the powers they unveil and all the mysteries they reserve, all their suggestions and all their suppressions, are at first adorable merely. Delightful beyond words they become in time, as the subtler and weightier work of Æschylus or Shakespeare; but like these they first fill and exalt the mind with a strange and violent pleasure which is the highest mood of worship; reverence intensified to the last endurable degree. The mind, if then it enjoys at all or wonders at all, knows little of its own wonder or its own enjoyment; the air and light about it is too fine and pure to breathe or bear. The least thought of these men has in it something intricate and enormous, faultless as the formal work of their triumphant art must be. All mysteries of good and evil, all wonders of life and death, lie in their hands or at their feet. They have known the causes of things, and are not too happy. The fatal labour of the world, the clamour and hunger of the open-mouthed all-summoning grave, all fears and hopes of ephemeral men, are indeed

made subject to them, and trodden by them underfoot; but the sorrow and strangeness of things are not lessened because to one or two their secret springs have been laid bare and the courses of their tides made known; refluent evil and good, alternate grief and joy, life inextricable from death, change inevitable and insuperable fate. Of the three, Michel Angelo is saddest; on his, the most various genius of the three, the weight of things lies heaviest. Glad or sad as the days of his actual life may have been, his work in the fullness of its might and beauty has most often a mournful meaning, some grave and subtle sorrow latent under all its life. Here in one design is the likeness of perishable pleasure; Vain Delight with all her children; one taller boy has drawn off a reverted and bearded mask, on which another lays hold with one hand, fingering it as with lust or curiosity; his other hand holds to the mother's knee; behind her a third child lurks and cowers; she, with a hard broad smile of dull pleasure, feeds her eyes on the sight of her own face in a hand-mirror. Fear and levity, cruelty and mystery, make up their mirth; evil seems to impend over all these joyous heads, to hide behind all these laughing features: they are things too light for hell, too low for heaven; bubbles of the earth, brilliant and transient and poisonous, blown out of unclean foam by the breath of meaner spirits, to glitter and quiver for a little under the beams of a mortal sun. Cruel and curious and ignorant, all their faces are full of mean beauty and shallow delight. Hard by, a troop of Loves haul after them, with mocking mouths and straining arms, a live human mask, a hollow face shorn off from the head, old and grim and sad, worn

through and through with pain and time, from the vexed forehead to the sharp chin which grates against the ground; the eyes and lips full of suffering, sardonic and helpless; the face of one knowing his own fate, who has resigned himself sadly and scornfully to the violence of base and light desires; the grave and great features all hardened into suffering and self-contempt.

But in one separate head there is more tragic attraction than in these: a woman's, three times studied, with divine and subtle care; sketched and re-sketched in youth and age, beautiful always beyond desire and cruel beyond words; fairer than heaven and more terrible than hell; pale with pride and weary with wrong-doing; a silent anger against God and man burns, white and repressed, through her clear features. In one drawing she wears a head-dress of eastern fashion rather than western, but in effect made out of the artist's mind only; plaited in the likeness of closely-welded scales as of a chrysalid serpent, raised and waved and rounded in the likeness of a sea-shell. In some inexplicable way all her ornaments seem to partake of her fatal nature, to bear upon them her brand of beauty fresh from hell; and this through no vulgar machinery of symbolism, no serpentine or otherwise bestial emblem: the bracelets and rings are innocent enough in shape and workmanship; but in touching her flesh they have become infected with deadly and malignant meaning. Broad bracelets divide the shapely splendour of her arms; over the nakedness of her firm and luminous breasts, just below the neck, there is passed a band as of metal. Her eyes are full of proud and passionless lust after gold and blood; her hair, close

and curled, seems ready to shudder in sunder and divide into snakes. Her throat, full and fresh, round and hard to the eye as her bosom and arms, is erect and stately, the head set firm on it without any droop or lift of the chin; her mouth crueller than a tiger's, colder than a snake's, and beautiful beyond a woman's. She is the deadlier Venus incarnate;

πολλὴ μὲν ἐν θεοῖσι κοὐκ ἀνώνυμος
θεά·

for upon earth also many names might be found for her: Lamia re-transformed, invested now with a fuller beauty, but divested of all feminine attributes not native to the snake—a Lamia loveless and unassailable by the sophist, readier to drain life out of her lover than to fade for his sake at his side; or the Persian Amestris, watching the only breasts on earth more beautiful than her own cut off from her rival's living bosom; or Cleopatra, not dying but turning serpent under the serpent's bite; or that queen of the extreme East who with her husband marked every day as it went by some device of a new and wonderful cruelty. In one design, where the cruel and timid face of a king rises behind her, this crowned and cowering head might stand for Ahab's, and hers for that of Jezebel. Another study is in red chalk; in this the only ornaments are ear-rings. In a third, the serpentine hair is drawn up into a tuft at the crown with two ringlets hanging, heavy and deadly as small tired snakes. There is a drawing in the furthest room at the Buonarroti Palace which recalls and almost reproduces the design of these three. Here also the electric hair, which looks as though it would hiss and glitter with sparks if once touched, is wound up to a tuft with serpentine plaits and involutions;

all that remains of it unbound falls in one curl, shaping itself into a snake's likeness as it unwinds, right against a living snake held to the breast and throat. This is rightly registered as a study for Cleopatra; but notice has not yet been accorded to the subtle and sublime idea which transforms her death by the aspic's bite into a meeting of serpents which recognise and embrace, an encounter between the woman and the worm of Nile, almost as though this match for death were a monstrous love-match, or such a mystic marriage as that painted in the loveliest passage of "Salammbô," between the maiden body and the scaly coils of the serpent and the priestess alike made sacred to the moon; so closely do the snake and the queen of snakes caress and cling. Of this idea Shakespeare also had a vague and great glimpse when he made Antony "murmur, *Where's my serpent of old Nile?*" mixing a foretaste of her death with the full sweet savour of her supple and amorous "pride of life." For what indeed is lovelier or more luxuriously loving than a strong and graceful snake of the nobler kind?

After this the merely terrible designs of Michel Angelo are shorn of half their horror; even the single face as of one suddenly caught and suddenly released from hell, with wild drapery blown behind it by a wind not of this world, strikes upon the sight and memory of a student less deeply and sharply. Certain of his slight and swift studies for damned souls and devils—designs probably for the final work in which he has embodied and made immortal the dream of a great and righteous judgment between soul and soul--resemble much at first sight, and more on longer inspection, the similar studies

and designs of Blake. One devil indeed recalls at once the famous "ghost of a flea," having much of the same dull and liquorish violence of expression. Other sketches in the small chamber of his palace bring also to mind his great English disciple: the angry angel poised as in fierce descent; the falling figure with drawn-up legs, splendidly and violently designed; the reverted head showing teeth and nostrils: the group of two old men in hell; one looks up howling, with level face; one looks down with lips drawn back. Nothing can surpass the fixed and savage agony of his face, immutable and imperishable. In this same room are other studies worth record: a Virgin and Child, unfinished, but of supreme strength and beauty; the child fully drawn, with small strong limbs outlined in faint red, rounded and magnificent; soft vigorous arms, and hands that press and cling. There is a design of a covered head, looking down; mournful, with nervous mouth, with clear and deep-set eyes; the nostril strong and curved. Another head, older, with thicker lips, is drawn by it in the same attitude.

Beside the Jezebel or Amestris of the Uffizj there is a figure of Fortune, with a face of cold exaltation and high clear beauty; strong wings expand behind her, or shadows rather of vast and veiled plumes; below her the wheel seems to pause, as in a lull of the perpetual race. This design was evidently the sketch out of which the picture of Fortune in the Corsini Palace was elaborated by some pupil of the master's. In that picture, as in the Venus and Cupid with mystic furniture of melancholy masks and emblems in the background, lodged

now in the last Tuscan chamber but one of the Uffizj, the meaner hand of the executive workman has failed to erase or overlay the great and fruitful thought of that divine mind in which their first conceptions lay and gathered form. The strong and laughing God treading with a vigorous wantonness the fair flesh of his mother; the goddess languid and effused like a broad-blown flower, her soft bright side pressed hard under his foot and nestling heel, her large arm lifted to wrest the arrow from his hand, with a lazy and angry mirth; and at her feet the shelves full of masks, sad inverted faces, heads of men overset, blind strings of broken puppets forgotten where they fell; all these are as clearly the device of Michel Angelo's great sad mind as the handiwork is clearly none of his. Near the sketch of Fortune is a strange figure, probably worked up into some later design. A youth with reverted head, wearing furry drapery with plumy fringes, has one leg drawn up and resting on a step; the face, as it looks back, is laughing with fear; the hysterical horror of some unseen thing is branded into the very life of its fair features. This violent laugh as of a child scared into madness subjects the whole figure, brilliant and supple in youth as it seems, to the transformation of terror. Upon this design also much tragic conjecture of allegory or story might be spent, and wasted.

There are here no other sketches so terrible, except one of hell by Luca Signorelli, rough and slight in comparison: a fierce chaos of figures fighting, falling, crushing and crushed together, their faces hissed at and their limbs locked round by lithe snakes, their eyes blasted and

lidless from the hot wind and heaving flame; one lost face of a woman looks out between two curving bat's wings, deadlier than the devils about her who plunge and struggle and sink.

The sketches of Filippo Lippi are exquisite and few. One above all, of Lucrezia Buti in her girlhood as the painter found her at Prato in the convent, is of a beauty so intolerable that the eyes can neither endure nor abstain from it without a pleasure acute even to pain which compels them to cease looking, or a desire which, as it compels them to return, relapses into delight. Her face is very young, more faultless and fresher than the first forms and colours of morning; her pure mouth small and curved, cold and tender; her eyes, set with an exquisite mastery of drawing in the clear and gracious face, seem to show actual colour of brilliant brown in their shapely and lucid pupils, under their chaste and perfect eyelids; her hair is deeply drawn backwards from the sweet low brows and small rounded cheeks, heaped and hidden away under a knotted veil whose flaps fall on either side of her bright round throat. The world has changed for painters and their Virgins since the lean school of Angelico had its day and its way in art; this study assuredly was not made by a kneeling painter in the intervals of prayer. More vivid, more fertile, and more dramatic than Lippo, the great invention and various power of Benozzo never produced a face like this. For pure and simple beauty it is absolutely unsurpassable: innocent enough also for a Madonna, but pure by nature, not chaste through religion. No creeds have helped to compose the holiness of her beauty. The meagre and

arid sanctities of women ascetic by accident or abstemious by force have nothing in common with her chastity. She might be as well a virgin chosen of Artemis as consecrated to Christ. Mystic passions and fleshless visions have never taken hold upon her sense or faith. No flower and no animal is more innocent; none more capable of giving and of yielding to the pleasure that they give. Before the date of her immortal lover there was probably no artist capable of painting such a thing at all: and in none of his many paintings does the stolen nun look and smile with a more triumphant and serene supremacy of beauty.

There are two studies of the Holy Family by Lippo in these rooms; the one nearest this separate head of Lucrezia is a sketch for the picture above the doorway in the far small room filled with works of the more ancient masters only. The St. John in this sketch is admirable for fat strength and childish character; and the entire group, in outline as in colour, full of that tender beauty combined with vigorous grace of which this great painter never fails. The second study is more curious; the child lies between the mother's and a nurse's hands; a large book lies open on a broad straw chair, and a tall boy leans upon the chair and watches. The attempted realism here is as visible as in the other is a voluntary subjection to conventional habit and the beauty of prescription. Near the first group are some small studies of separate figures; two of boys, very beautiful. One, a schoolboy or chorister seemingly, is seated on a form and clothed in a long close gown; his face, grave and of exquisite male beauty, looking down as if in pain or thought;

from some vessel at his feet rises a thick column of lighted smoke. Another boy with full curled hair is drawn as walking close behind.

Of Sandro Botticelli the samples are more frequent; and in these simple designs the painter is seen at no disadvantage. The dull and dry quality of his thin pallid colouring can here no longer impair the charm of his natural grace, the merit of his strenuous labour. Many of his single figures are worthy of praise and study: the head of a girl with gathered hair; the figure of a youth raised from the dead; that of an old man with a head like a satyr's. Two groups not far apart may be used as studies of his various power and fancy. The first, of two witches loosely draped, not of the great age common to their kind; one stirs and feeds the fire under a caldron of antique fashion and pagan device; one turns away with a hard dull smile showing all her wolfish teeth. The second, of a tuft of marsh-lilies midway on a steep and bare hill-side; under them, where the leaves and moistened earth are cool from the hidden well-head, a nymph lies deeply asleep; Cupid, leaning and laughing over her with a clear and crafty face, presses one hand upon her bosom while the other draws out an arrow. The design is full of fresh beauty, a sense of light and wind and fragrant high-lying land. A Virgin with veil bound up is among the gracefullest and purest of his many studies in that kind. Here also is a sketch for the single figure of Venus, seemingly the one sold in England in 1863, with no girdle of roses round the flanks; not the lovelier or likelier Venus of the two. Another careful satyr-like head suggests the suppressed leaning to gro-

tesque invention and hunger after heathen liberty which break out whenever this artist is released from the mill-horse round of mythologic virginity and sacred childhood : in which at all times he worked with such singular grace and such ingenuity of pathetic device. A sample of his religious manner is the kneeling angel with parted lips and soft fair face ; another, the figure of St. John wrapped in skins. Among the unregistered designs here is one, evidently a study for the male figure in Botticelli's beautiful and battered picture of Spring ; beautiful for all its quaintness, pallor, and deformities. The sketched figure is slightly made, with curling hair, and one hand resting by the hip ; the tree to which in the picture he turns and reaches after fruit is not here given. Among others which may belong to this painter is the sketch of a heavy beardless mask, with fat regular features, round chin, and open lips ; an older face, three-quarters seen, with a sick and weary look in the lips, with eyes and cheeks depressed ; a child's head, large, sharp though round, studied evidently and carefully from the life ; the mouth curved, with long lips ; an old profile, aquiline and small ; and a head somewhat resembling that of Blake, bald, but with curling hair on the temples ; with protuberant brow and protrusive underlip, the chin also prominent. In all these is the same constant and noble effort to draw vigorously and perfectly, in many the same faint and almost painful grace, which give a distinct value and a curious charm to all the works of Botticelli.

The splendid and strong fertility of Filippino Lippi, unequalled save by that of Benozzo, has here borne much noble fruit. His numerous sketches are ranged in

different rooms, far apart from each other, among various samples of his own school and time ; and may be noted at random, single figures and larger groups alike. The artist had less gift of reproducing physical beauty, less lyric loveliness of work, less fullness of visible and contagious pleasure in his execution, than his father ; but far more of variety, of flexible emotion, of inventive enjoyment and indefatigable fancy. From the varied and vagrant life of the elder these qualities might rather have been expected to develope in him than in his son ; but if Lippo is more of a painter, Lippino is more of a dramatist. To him apparently the sudden varieties and resources of secular art becoming visible and possible conveyed and infused into his work a boundless energy of delight. Much may be traced to his master Botticelli; more to the force of a truly noble blood inherited from the monk and nun his parents, glorious above all their kind for beauty, for courage and genius ; most of all to the native impulse and pliancy of his talent. From his teacher we may derive the ambition after new things, the desire of various and liberal invention, the love of soft hints and veiled meanings, with something now and then of the hard types of face and form, the satisfaction apparently found in dry conventional faults, which disfigure the beauty of Botticelli's own pictures. With these types however he was not long content ; no faces can be fuller of a lovely life and brilliant energy than many of Lippino's; and his father's incomparable sense of beauty could not but have preserved from grave or continual error even a son who had not inherited and acquired so many and such noble powers. It is singular that some of the

faultiest and most favourite types of his master reappear in the late frescoes of Lippino which add even to the church of Santa Maria Novella new glory and beauty. In those two great pictures of martyrdom and miracle there are faces suggestive of overmuch leather and bony outline, such as Botticelli, in the violent pursuit of realism, too often allowed himself to design for the sake of genuine expression and physical fidelity. Whereas in Lippino's earlier and greater frescoes at the Carmine there is no shortcoming of the kind. A fair sample of the somewhat lean and fleshless beauty, worn down it seems by some sickness or natural trouble rather than by any ascetic or artificial sorrow, in which Botticelli must have taught his pupil to take pleasure, is here in the veiled head of Simonetta, thin-faced, with small sharp features, bright intent eyes, and rippling hair; a model, it will be remembered, dear to the teacher of Lippino. Scarcely less in the manner of his master is the figure of an angel waiting by a door, or the group of witches and beggars, full of a fierce tumultuous grace. Near these is the strange typical figure of a woman holding what seems some armorial blazon on a scroll in her hand; her face is also thin, fierce, and hesitating; some doubtful evil, some mystery of a witch's irresolute anger, is half expressed and half suppressed by her features and action. If indeed she was meant simply for the presiding genius of a family or some allegoric spirit about to proclaim their titles, the artist has contrived to give her rather the aspect of a sorceress who holds their house in her hand, a Sidonia ready to destroy their hope of generation by a single spell. Especially will she recall the heroine of Meinhold to those who have

seen Mr. E. Burne Jones's nobler drawing of the young Sidonia wearing a gown whose pattern is of branching and knotted snakes, black upon the golden stuff; for the garment of this witch also is looped up and brooched with serpents. Not far off is the figure of a youth, turbaned, with both hands clasping a staff; his face that of one suddenly startled; noticeable, as are all these smaller studies, for graceful and individual character. Two larger sketches in the same room seem to be either parts of a single story or dubious and tentative studies taken while the artist had not made up his mind how to work and what to work upon. In the one, Cupids discover a knight sleeping in some dim spell-bound place; with soft laughter, with silent feet and swift fingers, they draw off his armour and steal away the sword and helmet, leaving his head bare to the dew and wind of that strange twilight. In the other division, parted off by a mere rough line drawn across the paper, a knight armed, and newly-landed from a ship just inshore, finds a maiden asleep under the sea-rocks; in the low sky behind the ship a faint fire of dawn has risen, and touches the shadowed shore and the dissolving clouds with growing and hesitating light. The design was not improbably made for a picture of Bacchus and Ariadne; it has the cold and lucid beauty of an older legend translated and transformed into mediæval shape. More than any others, these painters of the early Florentine school reproduce in their own art the style of thought and work familiar to a student of Chaucer and his fellows or pupils. Nymphs have faded into fairies, and gods subsided into men. A curious realism has grown up out of that very ignorance and perversion which seemed as if

it could not but falsify whatever thing it touched upon. This study of Filippino's has all the singular charm of the romantic school which remains alike remote from pure tradition and allegoric invention. The clear form has gone, the old beauty dropped out of sight; no freshness and fervour of new significance has come to supplant it; no memory and no desire has begun to reach back with studious eyes and reverted hands towards it, as towards some purer and fuller example of art than any elsewhere attainable; but the mediæval or romantic form has an incommunicable charm of its own. False and monstrous as are the conditions and the local colouring with which it works, the forms and voices of women and men which it endeavours to make us see and hear are actually audible voices and visible forms. Before Chaucer could give us a Pandarus or a Cressida, all knowledge and memory of the son of Lycaon and the daughter of Chryses must have died out, the whole poem collapsed into romance; but far as these may be removed from the true tale and the true city of Troy, they are not phantoms; they tread real earth, and breathe real air, though it be not in Greece or Troas. Discrowned of epic tradition, dispossessed of divine descent, they are not yet wholly modern, not yet degraded and deformed into base and brutish likeness by the realism and the irony of Shakespeare. Divine they are no longer, but not as yet merely porcine and vulpine. So it is with such designs as this Ariadne, if Ariadne it be; they belong to the same age, almost to the same instant, of transition. Two great samples exist of this school among painters: the Birth of Venus by Sandro Botticelli, the Death of Procris by Piero di Cosimo. Of Filippino's

sketch the chief charm lies in a dim light of magic morning mixed with twilight and shed over strange seas and a charmed shore. No careful and grateful student of this painter can overlook his special fondness for sea-sides; the tenderness and pleasure with which he touches upon the green opening of their chines or coombs, the clear low ranges of their rocks. Two admirable pictures in Florence bear witness to this; in the Uffizj his great Adoration of the Magi, where beyond the furthest meadows and behind the tallest trees far-off downs and cliffs open seaward, and further yet pure narrow spaces intervene of gracious and silent sea; and in the Pitti his small similar landscape of the Nativity, where adoring angels rain roses after roses over mother and child; and outside a close fence of interwoven rose-bushes, the sweet and various land breaks down to a green clear shore after miles of rocky and watery field. But that something of the same fondness is perceptible in Botticelli (especially in the background of his Venus, and in a very small picture at the Academia of St. Augustine and the child-angel, where infinite quiet capes and headlands divide bay from receding bay), it might be imagined that with the blood of a father who had roved and laboured perforce by sea Filippino had inherited some salt relish of the pure wide water and various shore unknown to the placid inland painters of his age, content as cattle or sheep with the valley and the field. To him therefore, rather than to Filippo, in whom this note of preference is not so perceptible, must on all accounts be assigned the honour—for to either it must be an additional honour—of having painted the Holy Family in the Corsini Palace, where children make

music on strange instruments, and in the background low broken rocks enclose and reveal cold inlets and quiet reaches of the sea. The colour and manner too seem altogether those of Lippino.

His finest study here of a single figure is in another part of the room ; a beautiful head of a youth bent sideways, with curls blown back and eager joyful eyes under lifted brows and eyelids ; the lips parted with eloquent and vehement expression of pleasure ; his cloak is loose, but the collar close about the round and splendid column of his throat ; the mouth seems indeed to talk, the hair to vibrate, the eyes to glitter. Near it is a group also noticeable, a boy seated and reaching out both arms towards a girl hard by ; full of vivid grace and action. Here too is a long narrow drawing for an architectural façade ; in a niche St. Martin and the beggar, who holds the cloak for the saint to cut ; the design is active and careful, capable of being put to noble use in fresco or sculpture. Another slight sketch suffices to show the power and enjoyment of a great artist ; the bull which has borne Europa far out into mid-sea, looking back with reverted horn and earnest eye, plunges on ahead through a dim swell of obscure and heaving water. No land is in sight, and no sky given ; the faint full wave of outer sea, beyond roller or breaker, is dimly seen to sweep and heave in continuous moving outline. A design apparently for the story of Phaethon (or more probably, as I now think, of Hippolytus) has the same kind of mediæval realism as that of Ariadne ; four horses plunge violently forward, whirling after them charioteer and chariot ; one alone turns backwards his reinless neck

in angry liberty; a man hard by, staff in hand, warns eagerly and vainly with hopeless hand and voice. Near this is a noble figure of Fear; the spirit or god of this passion attired in red, with hair loose under a cap lightly set on; in his hand a bow without a bow-string; the whole form and face violently afraid, terrified even to passion. In the second room are two other remarkable studies assigned to Filippino; one of a woman with low fat eyelids, round bare forehead, and cheeks with the hair drawn well off, and a short strained throat. The other, a composition of three figures; one, with a cap half covering his curls, seems to remonstrate; one, turning away, rests his foot sideways on a stool, showing the sole; a third, with face and left arm raised together, grasps a stool in his right hand. The story or the sense of this design may be conjectured by those who have time or taste for such guesswork.

The studies by Paolo Uccello give proof in the main rather of his laborious care and devout desire to work well than of his rare and vigorous fancy. Separate heads and figures of his drawing recur in more than one division; one at least is worth a second look; an ancient close-capped head, with the ear bent up as by continuous pressure upon it of knight's helmet or citizen's bonnet; the eye bright, and the neck thick; the mouth, with under-lip thrust out, expressive of a sick and scornful fatigue; a portrait seemingly of some one overworked by thoughtful or active life; an old man of great strength now wearing weak. Other figures, less suggestive, are not less vigorous in design: studies of men wrestling and sleeping, and two or three of a boy wrought evidently

after the same model, various in grace of attitude ; now sitting and now kneeling, and again seen from behind leaning on a spear, holding one foot with his hand, the full drapery drawn with skill and labour. Among other such academic studies we may notice that of a naked man, bony and sinewy in build of figure, seated on a narrow chair and holding out at arm's length a spear or staff. The woman resting against another chair is singularly beautiful for an artist who seems oftener to have painted men and animals in scenes of war or labour. Two other women are sitting near ; another drawing of the same man shows him sitting on the ground and clasping his knees. There is yet another study of wrestlers, one lifting the other back to back with a violent grace of action. In a small drawing of a boy watching some beast feed, which may be a rabbit or not, the boy's head recalls a noticeable head by Benozzo in the group of singing angels near the altar of the Riccardi chapel ; a head full-curled, open-mouthed, showing the teeth bare ; suddenly recalling the more grotesque manner of Blake in the midst of those fair smooth faces of serene and joyous angels. Two more of these sketches may here be set down ; one of a child, swift and slight ; one of the Moorish king Balthazar bearing his gifts for Christ. All these, however graceful and good, are simply sketched for the sake of such draperies and postures ; elsewhere the man's strong fancy and freshness of invention stand more visibly forward. His finest sketch here given is a design which recalls Chaucer's tale of three robbers, who seeking for Death to slay him are directed by an old man to a field where lies a great heap of treasure ; the two elder

send the youngest for wine that they may drink together to their good luck, and when left alone devise to slay him on his return and share the spoil; meantime he buys them poison for wine, being mindful of past violences, and covetous as they of the treasure; he returning is stabbed, and his murderers drink and die; and thus all three overtake the Death they sought. In this drawing of Paolo's three men lie dead in a wide woody field; the youngest in front, turned half over on his face as one who has died hard; the two others rigid and supine, with faces upturned to the bleak heaven, as men slain by sudden judgment. The rare trees growing in this fatal field of blood, a barren and storm-swept Aceldama, are bare of limb and worried with wind, blown out of shape and vexed with violent air; not a bird or beast has here place to feed or sing, but a grey and drifted roof of cloud leaves dark the shaken grass and haggard trees.

Piero di Cosimo has not here more than three or four drawings; not however mere studies after models, but compositions marked with the strong romantic invention, the subtle questionable grace, which more or less distinguish at all times from his fellows the painter of Procris and Andromeda. Here the sacred dove is seen poising over the heads of children at prayer, two holding an open book, others bearing lilies; a design full of the pure blind pleasure of worship. There a saint enters the desolate Thebaid with almost smiling face, the smile controlled by sadness and the sadness lighted by a smile; he is high up already in the waste land, full of storms and streams; the pine and the poplar are wasted with wind, the ground covered as with stones of stumbling and rocks

of offence ; only higher yet on a ledge of the hill-side under lee of the pine-wood a hermit's cottage hangs over the one barren path that winds among bleak spaces and windy solitudes. No modern realist has excelled in quaint homeliness of device Piero's study of a Nativity. The sacred group of mother, child, and angel is gathered together in a farm-house room ; of this group the angel supporting the new-born child in his arms is the most graceful figure : the ox looking on has an air of amusement, not of the reverence improper to brute nature ; amused possibly at the lodging chosen for it by an artist whose neglect of the traditional manger is a sample of his eccentric scorn of traditions. The window of this room looks out on a low land at sunrise, coldly lighted by the clear level morning new-born with the birth of Christ. The subject of another study I have not guessed at. Before a judge in round cap and eastern robe stands a girl averting her eyes from a Jew-faced man with silk sash and high hat, who is in act (it seems) to draw a dagger from his sleeve ; her expression that of a disdainful desire for death rather than shame : to her on the other hand a plumed knight seems eagerly to appeal ; his face is distinct in character, with small sharp upper lip and large chin. The girl may be a martyr standing before her judge for her faith's sake, between the lover she renounces and the traitor she abhors ; or the subject may be simply taken in full from some mediæval legend of adventurous constancy : it is assuredly graceful and vital as a piece of work.

There are a few designs of either Pollajuolo ; by Piero, a fine head, wrinkled and sullen ; a youth with

clasped hands in grinning agony of fear, the lips convulsed and sharpened by the rapid spasm ; by Antonio, an angel's or virgin's head, over-sweetened into a look of dulcet devotion, but graceful in its fashion ; a lady lightly veiled and sharply smiling, with ringlets on the neck and the main mass of hair plaited up behind ; groups of saints and virtues, chief among them Justice and Prudence with serpents emblematic of wisdom ; a fight of Centaurs and Lapithæ ; male studies, possibly for his picture of St. Sebastian in the National Gallery ; one in half-length stripped naked and seeming to appeal, and one of ruffianly feature looking upwards as though after the flight of his arrow; and a singular allegoric design, in which Fortune from a platform shakes gold into the hands of an infant, borne in the arms of a man weeping aloud and violently, while another child clings to his leg ; a winged boy leaning on a bar looks up to the group and laughs ; his light glad spiritual scorn, the blind bright indifference of the goddess who gives and the infant who receives gold, the loud agony of the grown man on whom, though bearing in his very hands the chosen of fortune, no flake of the golden rain has fallen ; the helpless adherence of the slighted older child ; all these are touched with rough suggestive rapidity, and share with many others the chief charm of these studies ; that gift, namely, which they give us, of ability to see for a little the passage of swift thoughts and flying fancies across fruitful minds of masters whose daily work was cut out something too much on one pattern, exclusive therefore of new device and mobile invention. Near this is what seems a portrait-drawing of a boy seated, thinking hard, unhandsome, with long mouth, powerful and grave.

Like others of the minor masters, Alessio Baldovinetti shows here more capacity of thought and work in slight studies than in large pictures, where his touch is thin and his work sterile. His Deposition from the Cross is fine enough to surprise at first sight, fresh and not feeble, inventive even, as in the action of the boy assisting. Another group by the same hand is forcible and expressive: two men, with faces full of busy passion, meet and exchange rapid looks; the one with hands clasped, the other about to mount a step on which his foot already rests, with elbow on knee and cheek on hand; hard by waits an attendant with a short pike, and near him a torturer or hangman, with the tools of his trade. This design is probably a sketch to be worked up in some picture of martyrdom; its dramatic and distinct intention strikes and attracts at once. By Taddeo Gaddi is a noticeable drawing of the meeting of Elizabeth and Mary; noticeable mainly for its background of rocky barren highland, with lean trees rising behind the low quaint house whence the elder woman has come forth in glad reverence and eager welcome. Of Mantegna there are but few samples, grouped mainly with those of Botticelli near the entrance of the first room; a design of the final death-grapple of Antæus with Hercules; one of Judith attended by two maids; a mask as of one just awakened after death in hell, fierce with perpetual fear and violent with immortal despair; a young girl gathering up her dress and looking back, her old nurse near at hand—a Juliet as it were before the advent of passion; a youth raised from the dead, in whom miraculous life leaps back into a face full of dawning wonder

and departing heaviness; an old man satyr-headed; a kneeling Virgin, recalling to modern eyes the earliest pictures of Mr. Rossetti—a type of clear holiness and grave beauty. Of Francia there is one example, pretty enough if also petty; a Virgin and Child among flowering rose-beds. Of Benozzo Gozzoli there is merely a double group of angels and pilgrims, not of course without interest for those who would follow in any way of work the trace of this Chaucer of painting; but not so full of labour and of life as they might hope, who had seen the cartoon at Pisa for his lost fresco of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and felt there as always the fruitful variety and vigour of his sleepless and joyous genius. By Ghirlandajo there is a veiled Virgin of straight and sad profile; by Masolino, a sketch of boys disputing, and a woman with chaplet in hand; by some pseudo-Giotto or Giottino, a Saint Cecilia at a piano-like organ, with a dog roughly sketched—curious and worth a look; by Pesello, a Virgin seated between Christ and St. John, an arm passed round either child; their heads are merely sketched; her face, under a light veil of loose hair, has a look at once pained and smiling. By Pesellino there are some fine studies of single figures, worth notice rather than comment. Of Masaccio there is here less than might be hoped; a few single figures, and one sketch of a crowd, strong but slight, and to which only the name appended draws immediate attention. By Lorenzo di Credi there is an elaborate study of a kneeling saint with huge fan-shaped beard.

In the same room, as elsewhere, are many sketches by hands unknown. Among these are several full of

various power and fine invention. A few only can here be noticed at random; as these: a man's head, three-quarters seen, with strong brows well apart, lips open and somewhat narrow, firm flattish nose and short neck; a girl seen from behind, with huddled clothes and arms violently lifted; studies of boys by the same hand, some sitting, one kneeling on a stool, one holding his foot; and again, different from this, a naked boy with foot wounded by a thorn; exquisite, and not copied from the statue; but full of grace and fair life. Elsewhere, also unassigned, is a vigorous drawing of a monk's head with cowl flung back: a larger design of the Virgin and certain saints adoring the corpse of Christ in a wilderness where grow the palms of martyrdom; far off by the ready grave an angel watches in wait; on a remote hill three dim crosses rise scarcely into light; and in another line of distance a city is seen, and bays of sea on a varying shore. To this is appended a note stating that the owner in 1458[1] "had it from a painter in the Borgo San Sepolcro, named Pietro."

By the sculptor Ghiberti there is a study for a statue in the shrine of a virgin saint; she stands glorified in the grace and state of delicate work, with hair drawn upwards round the head.

By Simone Memmi there is a finished drawing in three divisions, as though for a triptych; first the shep-

[1] I am not certain whether this be not rather the date of the painter's birth; the day of the month is added, I think the 12th or 13th of March, but cannot be sure that my hasty transcript was accurate or complete. Of the words given in the text there is no doubt.

herds awakened by a sudden sound of descending angels; then the Nativity, then the Crucifixion, with a guard of armed knights about the cross. There is no other sample of early Sienese work, and but one later drawing of a Sienese artist.

Of the Venetians, early or late, there is ample and splendid witness even in these slighter things how supreme was their power upon all forms of beauty. The drawings of Titian and Giorgione are indeed the chief decorations of the place. Among the earlier of their famous men there is a sketch by Gentile Bellini, of a procession with lighted candles through a square with a central well. The great painter of sacred feasts and triumphal crowds has left one minor and separate study: a youth reclining, who leans against a tree, his head crowned with rich and rippling hair. Of such studies there are many by his greater brother; one in red chalk, a lank-haired aquiline head; a group of monks, one kneeling as reproved, with a face of stupid shame; the reprover, an erect ascetic figure, stands over him with features sharpened for rebuke; two others look on, sly and frightened. By Giovanni too there is a procession; the crowd swarms deep in street and loggia, under roof and abroad. Near this is a sketch of a poet crowned with broad leaves of laurel, his back turned. In Bellini's chiaroscuro drawing of the "Burial of Christ" (No. 581 in the Uffizj Catalogue) there reappears as Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea a head here separately sketched; a head rather aging than aged, turbaned, with double tuft of moustache, and whiskers meeting under the chin; with strong mouth and glancing eyes. There is also a draw

ing by the master of himself, done in red chalk : the beautiful grave face, sweet and strong, full of grace and thought, is hard to mistake or to forget.

The designs of Carpaccio recall not less than these the painter's habit of mind and work. By him there is a drawing of two brothers, one with sword by side and wearing deep boots, one clothed in a full civic gown with round balls hanging down it by way of fringe, both with spurs on their heels. One design may be a sketch for his Presentation of the Virgin : here in the Piazzetta of Venice a priest receives a kneeling girl. There are sketches besides of hags, of priests and nuns ; a dog-headed chimæra with a fragment of sword stuck in its neck, the knight about to despatch it with the haft ; a crowd with horses and trumpets filling the Piazza of St. Mark, here altered in proportions, but not the less recognisable ; studies of full-sleeved arms and hands—one bearing keys, one a book, one an apple, and so forth—studiously wrought and varied ; a head that might well serve for Shylock's, the typical Jew of Venice, with a face of keen and vigorous cruelty ; a reading priest, with broad beard shaped like an open fan.

But the designs of Titian and Giorgione are more precious and wonderful than these. From his sketches alone it might be evident that Titian was the chief of all landscape painters. The priceless samples of his work here exhibited demand long and loving study from those who desire to estimate them aright. They are fresher than the merest suggestions, more perfect than the most finished elaborations of other men. It is not by intellectual weight or imaginative significance that these

Venetians are so great. That praise is the proper apanage of the Milanese and the Roman schools—of Michel Angelo and Leonardo. Those had more of thought and fancy, of meaning and motive. But since the Greek sculptors there was never a race of artists so humbly and so wholly devoted to the worship of beauty. This was enough for them ; and for no other workmen.

First among these pen-and-ink landscapes of Titian is one which gives us in full outline the likeness of a high hill, rising over a fort; before and beyond it a wild length of broken land expands and undulates, clothed with all manner of trees in full beauty of blossom and leaf, haunted by flying and settling birds. Next to this we find a sudden sunny bank in the dim depth of a wood, with a wolf at watch and a rabbit at wait. Next, a bay deeply wooded to the verge of the soft sea, with low rocks far off under the wash of the tender water. The fourth design is traversed by a river, which curves rapidly and roughly round the sudden steep of a broken bank, fringed with wild herbage and foliage of untrimmed and windy growth ; in front, where the wide water elbows its way round a corner of grassy land, a little child is embracing a lamb, with fat strenuous arms and intent face; hard by is the stump of a felled tree, well-nigh buried in rank overgrowth of deep wild grass ; beyond this the rising towers of a city watered by the further stream, and a remote church seen among tall slim stems of trees. Next to this we find a city set among the sloping folds of a hill-country ; full in front of the design are two firs, rigidly clipped and pared up to the topmost tuft; on a rise of ground beyond these a small close

wood, crowning as with native plumes the head of the slanting land; in the middle valley are sheep at pasture; and the wooded slopes, warm with summer and sweet at once with life and sleep, bend and flow either way in fruitful repose, shaped like waves of the sea after a wind, that seem at once to move and to rest, to change and to remain.

Next, a sudden nook or corner of high-lying land in some wild wood, opening at the skirt upon a fresh waste ground, a place of broken banks fringed and feathered with thick grasses full of the wind and the sun; to the right, a land of higher hills, with a city framed and radiant among them. Then comes another such corner of woodland, rocky, strewn with stones curiously notched and veined; and here too infinite summer hills open and recede and melt into further and nearer forms in solid undulation without change, billows of the inland crowned not with foam but with grass, and clothed with trees, not moulded out of mutable water.

Other work of Titian is here besides these seven finished sketches; slighter work, and not in the line of landscape. There is a vision of Virgin and Child appearing in a Thebaid desert to some saint—Anthony apparently, as the typical swine's snout obtrudes itself with a quaint innocent bestial expression. Note also a lovely and vigorous group of Cupids grappling in play with a great hound, which all they can hardly overset; the eager laughing labour of the bare-limbed boys and the gravely gamesome resistance of the beast are things to see and remember, as given by the great master. There are studies too for the famous picture of St. Peter

Martyr; there is a head like Michel Angelo's Brutus, with large broad nose.

In samples of Giorgione's work the collection is not less rich. Sixteen sketches and studies, variously finished, bear witness for him. First, a most noble male profile, with blunt nose, mouth fretted, and hard cheek; a strong man weary, with tough spirit growing tired too. Unlike this, a large priestly head, loose about the jaw, firm in the upper part; with a long mouth like a slit; by no means unlike the recognisable head of Alexander VI.; on the medals of the great Borgia you see just such a strong brow of statecraft, such a resolute eye, such a heavy lax lustful under-face. Next, three heads together; the first may be boy's or girl's, having in it the delicious doubt of ungrown beauty, pausing at the point where the ways of loveliness divide; we may give it the typical strawberry flower (*Fragoletta*) and leave it to the Loves; the second is a priest's, wearing a skull-cap, and very like the middle musician of the three in Giorgione's divine picture in the Pitti; the third an old man's head, cowled and bearded. Next a girl with a book of music; many bend over her; two faces to the right are specially worth notice; a youth of that exquisite Venetian beauty which in all these painters lifts male and female together on an equal level of loveliness; and an older head near him, stamped with scorn as with a brand. Next, and slightly wrought, on a raised couch or step of a palace, a group of revellers embracing and gazing outward; one leans round a girl to read with her from some joyous book. Next, a full face, wasted by time or thought or pleasure, with a clear sardonic look left

in it; next, a close-curled imperial head; next, a gathering of counsellors, a smile on their chief man's face. Then a very noble naked study from behind; a figure planted with knees apart as if bestriding, with strained back and muscles leaping, with curly Herculean hair; naked down to the thighs, then draped, but finished only to one knee. Next, one of the most perfect of these studies, a superb head of one in pain, the face drawn and not disfigured by suffering. Next, an infant covering its mouth with its hand in a lifelike and gracious gesture. Next, in a Thebaid, a skin-clad saint sinking as in swoon, all but sunken already through fasting or trance; on the same paper are studies of hands and feet. Then a Virgin and Child, with an old man kneeling; then the figure of a youth seemingly made ready for torture, a fair and brave martyr's face; this and the next are figures about two-thirds or three-fourths of the length of the whole. The next I take to be a design for Lucretia; a naked woman, loose-haired, with the left arm raised, and with the right hand setting as it seems a dagger under the right breast; on the wall by her is an escutcheon, which may indicate, if it be a serious part of the design, some later suicide than the Roman matron's; it matters little to the interest of the study. Apart from these is a sketch of some pagan feast, with torchlight and blast of trumpets; several figures and faces are noticeable here: a youth fallen on his knees; a boyish torch-bearer, with blown cheeks and subtle sharp-edged eyes; the head of a boy who rests his hand on the shoulder of another; a face seen behind, with rounded mouth and blowing hair: the whole design profuse of interest and invention. In

these light sketches, or even in these rough notes, the vivacity and warm strength as of sunlight which distinguish the painter's imagination are traceable. With all the deep sweet tragic colour, the divine oppression of a delight whose eyes grow sorrowful with past thought and future dream—"large discourse, looking before and after;" with all the pathos of pleasure never translated as in his pictures but once, in Keats's Ode to Melancholy; the adorable genius of Giorgione, like the beautiful mouth of Chaucer's mistress, is always "most glad and sad."

By Paolo Veronese there is one design of a feast disturbed and breaking up; in one corner the figure of an old man; a girl sinking at his feet clasps him by the ancle. In front of course is a dog, and sidelong from under the table-cloth a dog's head peers with the bright-eyed caution of its kind; the whole design has interest and character. Unluckily for the affectionate students of Bonifazio, there is but one slight sketch by that master of all gracious and pleasant beauty; as the subject is music-making, it might have been finished into a nobly delightful piece of work, and significant of his love of sweet sound and fair form met together and made one in the sight of art. Of Tintoretto there is not much arranged and framed above-stairs: a Doge in his quaint buttoned robe; a study of a knight's lance and helmet held by his page—Gattamelata's, as I thought at first, a design for the great portrait, but it seems doubtful. A more important design is one, very noble and impressive in sentiment, of the Deposition of Christ; the body is carried off through a steep and strait gorge between rocky hills below Calvary; the Virgin has fallen in utter

swoon. There is also a small oval-faced figure of a girl at prayer; and a noble design of four angels rushing down to judgment, with violent wings and blowing trumpets that betray the artist; their fierce flight and thunder of summoning sound have roused the dead already; some are precipitated hellward, some aspire as on sudden wings; three newly roused sit still and gaze upward. Again, a naked woman startled in bed by the advent of a witch with cap and broom. In the lower rooms, among the unregistered masses of designs, I saw a huge portfolio crammed with rough figure-sketches by Tintoretto, in his broad gigantic manner, but too slight to be of any descriptive interest, though to him they doubtless had their use and might have the like to an artist who should now care to study them.

Assigned to Raffaelle is a sketch in pen-and-ink of a cavalcade passing a seaport town, recognisable as the first design for one of the great series at Siena representing the life of Æneas Sylvius, in which Raffaelle is supposed to have assisted Pinturicchio. The name of "Messer Domenicho da Capranicha" (the Cardinal) is scribbled on the drawing itself; and the composition is pretty much that of the fresco; the horses turn at the same point, the groups are massed and the line of harbour shown in the same manner. By Giulio Romano there are two designs for Circe; in one the sorceress lets down an urn among her transformed beasts, holding it may be some strange food or fume of magic drugs; among them are two griffins and an eagle. In the other design she is in the act of transformation, an incarnate sorcery; two men yet undegraded are already confounded and lost

with their fallen fellows. Another careful sketch is that of Dædalus building up the hollow wooden cow for Pasiphae; the strange machine is well-nigh perfect; a whole troop of Loves lend helping hands to the work, sawing wood, whetting steel, doing all manner of carpentry, with light feet and laughing faces full of their mother's mirth.

Of Sodoma, again, there is but one example; it may be that Vasari's well-known and memorable ill-will towards the great Sienese excluded others from his collection, if indeed this one came from thence. It is a beautiful and elaborate drawing, partly coloured; a boy with full wavy curls, crowned with leaves, wearing a red dress banded with gold and black and fringed with speckled fur; the large bright eyes and glad fresh lips animate the beauty of the face; Razzi[1] never painted a fairer, full as his works are of fair forms and faces.

I may here, as well as anywhere else among these disconnected notes, turn to the samples of German work in this collection; to the sketches of Durer, Holbein, and Mabuse, which have found favour in Italian eyes. Two studies of the Passion by Durer are noticeable; in this Christ is bearing the cross, in that sinking under it; the press of the crowd, the fashion of the portcullis, recall the birthplace and the habit of the master. From his hand we have also secular and allegoric sketches; one a design for the famous figure of Fortune; an old man's

[1] Bazzi, as the last Sienese guide-book will needs have him called; Razzi or Bazzi, Sodoma or Sodona, the name of St. Catherine's great painter seems doomed to remain a riddle. Happily the beauty of his work is no such open question, so that the name matters little enough.

head with heavy lips and nose, a collar tied loose round the large throat; another head, bearded and supine; slight studies of man and horse and child; a Deposition of Christ, and a Burial, with fine realistic landscape hard by the city walls; a man beheading a woman, who in the act grasps hard the doomed head with his unarmed left hand. By Mabuse there is a quaint horror in the way of martyrology; the boiling of some saint in a vessel like a kitchen-pot, while one tormentor scalds his head with water or oil or molten metal out of a little bucket at the end of a pole. Mabuse in his sketches has revelled in the ways and works of hangmen, seen in a grim broad light of German laughter; their quaint gestures and quaint implements have a ludicrous and bloody look; observe another pot with rings round it, ominous and simple in make, and the boy staring with strained eyes. These fine sharp caricatures of torturers might serve a modern eye as studies for Henriet Cousin of "Notre-Dame de Paris" or Master Hansen of "Sidonia;" there is a stupid funereal fun in the brute mechanism of their aspect. He has also a really fine drawing of a saint stepping into his own grave, made ready in a chapel before the altar. Martin Schöngauer too has left a good female head with ample hair, and a strong hard design of a knight and devil in deadly grapple. A head after Holbein is unmistakeable; the hair is thick, the chin long, the fine lips fretted and keen. Not far off is the only waif of Spanish art I find here; a head sketched in chalk by Velasquez, with large eyes and red lips, the upper lip thin.

I turn back to Florence for my last note; to one of

her dearest and noblest names, reserved with love for this last place. With the majestic and the tragic things of art we began, at the landmarks set by Leonardo and Michel Angelo; and are come now, not quite at random, to the lyric and elegiac loveliness of Andrea del Sarto. To praise him would need sweeter and purer speech than this of ours. His art is to me as the Tuscan April in its temperate days, fresh and tender and clear, but lulled and kindled by such air and light as fills the life of the growing year with fire. At Florence only can one trace and tell how great a painter and how various he was. There only but surely there can the influence and pressure of the things of time on his immortal spirit be understood; how much of him was killed or changed, how much of him could not be. There are the first-fruits of his flowering manhood, when the bright and buoyant genius in him had free play and large delight in its handiwork; when the fresh interest of invention was still his, and the dramatic sense, the pleasure in the play of life, the power of motion and variety; before the old strength of sight and of flight had passed from weary wing and clouding eye, the old pride and energy of enjoyment had gone out of hand and heart. How the change fell upon him, and how it wrought, any one may see who compares his later with his earlier work; with the series, for instance, of outlines representing the story of St. John Baptist in the desolate little cloister of Lo Scalzo. In these mural designs there is such exultation and exuberance of young power, of fresh passion and imagination, that only by the innate grace can one recognise the hand of the master whom hitherto we knew by the works of his after life,

when the gift of grace had survived the gift of invention. This and all other gifts it did survive; all pleasure of life and power of mind, all the conscience of the man, his will, his character, his troubles, his triumphs, his sin and honour, heart-break and shame. All these his charm of touch, his sweetness of execution, his "Elysian beauty, melancholy grace," outlived, and blossomed in their dust. Turn from that cloistral series to those later pictures painted when he was "faultless" and nothing more; and seeing all the growth and all the gain, all the change and all the loss, one to whom the record was unknown would feel and foreknow his story and his sorrow. In the cloister, what life and fullness of growing and strengthening genius, what joyous sense of its growth and the fair field before it, what dramatic delight in character and action! where St. John preaches in the wilderness and the few first listeners are gathered together at his feet, old people and poor, soul-stricken, silent—women with worn still faces, and a spirit in their tired aged eyes that feeds heartily and hungrily on his words—all the haggard funereal group filled from the fountain of his faith with gradual fire and white-heat of soul; or where Salome dances before Herod, an incarnate figure of music, grave and graceful, light and glad, the song of a bird made flesh, with perfect poise of her sweet slight body from the maiden face to the melodious feet; no tyrannous or treacherous goddess of deadly beauty, but a simple virgin, with the cold charm of girlhood and the mobile charm of childhood; as indifferent and innocent when she stands before Herodias and when she receives the severed head of John with her slender and steady hands; a pure

bright animal, knowing nothing of man, and of life nothing but instinct and motion. In her mother's mature and conscious beauty there is visible the voluptuous will of a harlot and a queen; but, for herself, she has neither malice nor pity; her beauty is a maiden force of nature, capable of bloodshed without bloodguiltiness; the king hangs upon the music of her movement, the rhythm of leaping life in her fair fleet limbs, as one who listens to a tune, subdued by the rapture of sound, absorbed in purity of passion. I know not where the subject has been touched with such fine and keen imagination as here. The time came when another than Salome was to dance before the eyes of the painter; and she required of him the head of no man, but his own soul; and he paid the forfeit into her hands. With the coming of that time upon him came the change upon his heart and hand; "the work of an imperious whorish woman." Those words, set by the prophet as a brand upon the fallen forehead of the chosen bride, come back to mind as one studies in her husband's pictures the full calm lineaments, the large and serene beauty of Lucrezia del Fede; a predominant and placid beauty, placid and implacable, not to be pleaded with or fought against. Voluptuous always and slothful, subtle at times no doubt and sweet beyond measure, full of heavy beauty and warm slow grace, her features bear no sign of possible love or conscience. Seen side by side with his clear sad face, hers tells more of the story than any written record, even though two poets of our age have taken it up. In the feverish and feeble melodrama of Alfred de Musset there is no touch of tragedy, hardly a shadow of passionate and piteous truth; in Mr.

Browning's noblest poem—his noblest it seems to me—the whole tragedy is distilled into the right words, the whole man raised up and reclothed with flesh. One point only is but lightly touched upon—missed it could not be by an eye so sharp and skilful—the effect upon his art of the poisonous solvent of love. How his life was corroded by it and his soul burnt into dead ashes, we are shown in full; but we are not shown in full what as a painter he was before, what as a painter he might have been without it. This is what I think the works of his youth and age, seen near together as at Florence, make manifest to any loving and studious eye. In those latter works, the inevitable and fatal figure of the woman recurs with little diversity or change. She has grown into his art, and made it even as herself; rich, monotonous in beauty, calm, complete, without heart or spirit. But his has not been always the "low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand" it was then. He had started on his way towards another goal than that. Nothing now is left him to live for but his faultless hand and her faultless face—still and full, suggestive of no change in the steady deep-lidded eyes and heavy lovely lips without love or pudency or pity. Here among his sketches we find it again and ever again the same, crowned and clothed only with the glory and the joy and the majesty of the flesh. When the luxurious and subtle sense which serves the woman for a soul looks forth and speaks plainest from those eyes and lips, she is sovereign and stately still; there is in her beauty nothing common or unclean. We cannot but see her for what she is; but her majestic face makes no appeal for homage or forgiveness. Above

stairs and below I saw many of Andrea's studies of figure; first, a sketch of Lucrezia seated with legs bare, perfect in shapeliness and state; in a larger drawing she is naked, and holds a child; sitting, as I presume, for the appropriate part of the Virgin. There is another and most beautiful drawing on yellow paper, which gives her full face in all its glory of form without a fault—not heavenly, but adorable as heaven. His sketches of landscape and studies of children are lovely and many: round-limbed babies in red-chalk outline, with full-blown laughter in their mouths and eyes; such flowers of flesh and live fruits of man as only a great love and liking for new-born children could have helped him to render. The wonderful and beautiful make of limb and feature, the lovely lines and warm curves of the little form, are so tenderly and fully made the most of and caressed as with mother's hands, that here as in his portrait you can tell at once his fondness for them. His sad and sensitive smiling face has the look of a lover of children; the quiet and queenly beauty of his wife has not. One superb boy-baby (in Sidney's phrase, a "heavenly fool with most kiss-worthy face") attempting to embrace his round fat knees with his fat round arms, and laughing with delight in the difficulty, is a more triumphant child than ever painter drew before or since. A sketch of a castle with outlying lodge is marked as "begun on the twentieth of August, 1527." Among other studies is one of a cavalry skirmish among the rounded and rising downs of a high hill-country, with a church and castle at hand. Among the figure drawings I took note of these: a portrait in profile of a man still young, ill-

favoured and sullen, with sinewy neck and cruel eye, with snub nose and thick thrust-out lips—a portrait it clearly is, and whose it would be worth while to know, so careful has the artist been to reproduce the native stamp of aspect; a naked youth, with arms doubled up round the neck, leaning aslant on a staff, with ruffled hair and a set face; a noble head, like Nero's, in red chalk, with hair blown loose and rough by the wind; a boy's figure on a step of some entrance, drawing the curtain of a tent, with loose ribbons at the shoulder, and with a curling plume of hair; a slender figure, thin and graceful, the face smiling, but drawn and fixed; the fierce aquiline head of a prophet or apostle, with upper lip thinner than the under. These complete my roll, and conclude these notes. They might have been fuller and more orderly, but could never have had any value other than that of a clear and genuine impression. Transcribed at stray times from the roughest memorial jottings, they may claim to give this at least. I close as I began them with a hope that they may perhaps, in default of a better handbook, afford some chance help to a casual student of such unclassed relics of the old great schools, and with a glad affectionate memory of these and of all things in Florence.

NOTES ON SOME PICTURES OF 1868.

[PREFATORY NOTE.—I reprint these loose and cursory notes almost exactly as they were first issued, with the excision of two passages which I see now no reason to reproduce. It is not that in either case I find anything to unsay; that I have any palinode to sing, any retrac tation to offer. But in the one instance I think it no longer worth while to prolong the recollection of what I found feeble and futile in the work of a painter who will give us no more of bad work or good; and in the other instance I should feel it somewhat more than presumptuous, I should feel it indeed thankless and indecorous, to make mention but once of one of the greatest among modern artists, and then in a tone of blame or at least of complaint rather than of praise and thanksgiving. My opinion of his pictures exhibited in 1868 remains what it was then; but however slight may be the worth of that opinion, it would be unseemly to insist on it within the limits of these notes; limits which preclude all possibility of touching on the many and marvellous gifts of his regal and masterful genius. A competent critic who should undertake the task of re-viewing his work as a whole might permissibly note in passing the less excellent parts of it and set down the

years in which, as he might think, the master's hand had wrought more or less happily than its wont; but he would not desire to reissue by itself any detached notice of such work as he might consider unworthy of the workman at his best.]

I have been asked to note down at random my impressions of some few among this year's pictures. These I am aware will have no weight or value but that which a sincere and studious love of the art can give; so much I claim for them, and so much only. To pass judgment or tender counsel is beyond my aim or my desire.

Returning from the Academy I find two pictures impressed on my memory more deeply and distinctly than the rest. First of these—first of all, it seems to me, for depth and nobility of feeling and meaning—is Mr. Watts's "Wife of Pygmalion." The soft severity of perfect beauty might serve alike for woman or statue, flesh or marble; but the eyes have opened already upon love, with a tender and grave wonder; her curving ripples of hair seem just warm from the touch and the breath of the goddess, moulded and quickened by lips and hands diviner than her sculptor's. So it seems a Greek painter must have painted women, when Greece had mortal pictures fit to match her imperishable statues. Her shapeliness and state, her sweet majesty and amorous chastity, recall the supreme Venus of Melos. In this "translation" of a Greek statue into an English

picture, no less than in the bust of Clytie, we see how in the hands of a great artist painting and sculpture may become as sister arts indeed, yet without invasion or confusion; how, without any forced alliance of form and colour, a picture may share the gracious grandeur of a statue, a statue may catch something of the subtle bloom of beauty proper to a picture.

The other picture of which I would speak, unlike enough to this in sentiment or in tone, has in common with it the loftiest quality of beauty pure and simple. Indeed, of all the few great or the many good painters now at work among us, no one has so keen and clear a sense of this absolute beauty as Mr. Albert Moore. His painting is to artists what the verse of Théophile Gautier is to poets; the faultless and secure expression of an exclusive worship of things formally beautiful. That contents them; they leave to others the labours and the joys of thought or passion. The outlines of their work are pure, decisive, distinct; its colour is of the full sunlight. This picture of "Azaleas" is as good a type as need be of their manner of work. A woman delicately draped, but showing well the gentle mould of her fine limbs through the thin soft raiment; pale small leaves and bright white blossoms about her and above, a few rose-red petals fallen on the pale marble and faint-coloured woven mat before her feet; a strange and splendid vessel, inlaid with designs of Eastern colour; another—clasped by one long slender hand and filled from it with flowers—of soft white, touched here and there into blossom of blue: this is enough. The melody of colour, the symphony of form is complete: one more

beautiful thing is achieved, one more delight is born into the world ; and its meaning is beauty ; and its reason for being is to be.

We all owe so much to Mr. Leighton for the selection and intention of his subjects—always noble or beautiful as these are, always worthy of a great and grave art ; a thing how inexpressibly laudable and admirable in a time so largely given over to the school of slashed breeches and the school of blowsy babyhood !—we owe him, I say, so much for this that it seems ungracious to say a word of his work except in the way of thanks and praise. And yet I must say that I find no true touch of Greek beauty in the watery Hellenism of his Ariadne : she is a nobly moulded model of wax, such a figure as a mediæval sorceress might set to waste before a charmed fire and burn out the life of the living woman. The "Actæa" has the charm that a well-trained draughtsman can give to a naked fair figure ; this charm it has, and no other ; it has also a painful trimness suggestive of vapour-baths, of "strigil" and "rusma," of the toilet labours of a Juvenalian lady ; not the fresh sweet strength of limbs native to the sea, but the lower loveliness of limbs that have been steamed and scraped. The picture of Acme and Septimius is excellently illustrative of Mr. Theodore Martin's verse ; it is in no wise illustrative of Catullus. I doubt if Love would have sneezed approval of these lovers either to left or to right. In his two other pictures Mr. Leighton has, I think, reached his highest mark for this year. The majestic figure and noble head of Jonathan are worthy of the warrior whose love was wonderful, passing the love of woman ; the features resolute,

solicitous, heroic. The boy beside him is worthy to stand so near; his action has all the grace of mere nature, as he stoops slightly from the shoulder to sustain the heavy quiver. The portrait of a lady hard by has a gracious and noble beauty, too rare even among the abler of English workmen in this line.

I return now to the works of Mr. Watts. His little landscape is full of that beauty which lives a dim brief life between sunset and dusk. The faint flames and mobile colours of the sky, the dim warm woods, the flight of doves about the dovecote, have all their part in the grave charm of evening, are all given back to the eye with the grace and strength of a master's touch; the stacks that catch the glare and glow of low sunlight seem crude and violent in their intense yellow colour and hard angles of form: natural it may be, but a natural discord that jars upon the eye. "The Meeting of Jacob and Esau," though something too academic, has in part the especial, the personal grandeur of Mr. Watts's larger manner of work. In the pale smooth worn face of Jacob there is a shy sly shame which befits the supplanter: his well-nigh passive action, as of one half reassured and half abashed, bares to view the very heart and root of his nature; and the rough strenuous figure of Esau, in its frank grandeur of brave sunbrowned limbs, speaks aloud on the other side of the story, by the fervid freedom of his impetuous embrace. Far off, between the meeting figures, midmost of the remote cavalcade, the fair clear face of a woman looks out, pale under folds of white, patient and ill at ease; her one would take to be Leah. It is noticeable that one year, not over rich in excellent

work, should give us two admirable pictures drawn from the Hebrew chronicles. What they call scriptural art in England does not often bear such acceptable fruit. I know not if even Mr. Watts has ever painted a nobler portrait than this of Mr. Panizzi; it recalls the majestic strength and depth of Morone's work: there is the same dominant power of hand and keenness of eye, the same breadth and subtlety of touch, the same noble reticence of colour.

Before I pass on to speak of any other painter, I will here interpolate what I have to say of Mr. Watts's bust of Clytie. Not imitative, not even assimilative of Michel Angelo's manner, it yet by some vague and ineffable quality brings to mind his work rather than any Greek sculptor's. There is the same intense and fiery sentiment, the same grandeur of device, the same mystery of tragedy. The colour and the passion of this work are the workman's own. Never was a divine legend translated into diviner likeness. Large, deep-bosomed, superb in arm and shoulder, as should be the woman growing from flesh into flower through a godlike agony, from fairness of body to fullness of flower, large-leaved and broad of blossom, splendid and sad—yearning with all the life of her lips and breasts after the receding light and the removing love—this is the Clytie indeed whom sculptors and poets have loved for her love of the Sun their God. The bitter sweetness of the dividing lips, the mighty mould of the rising breasts, the splendour of her sorrow is divine: divine the massive weight of carven curls bound up behind, the heavy straying flakes of unfilleted hair below; divine the clear cheeks and low full forehead, the strong round neck

made for the arms of a god only to clasp and bend down to their yoke. We seem to see the lessening sunset that she sees, and fear too soon to watch that stately beauty slowly suffer change and die into flower, that solid sweetness of body sink into petal and leaf. Sculpture such as this has actual colour enough without need to borrow of an alien art.

The work of M. Legros is always of such a solid and serious excellence as to require more than a passing study. His picture of Henry VIII. and courtiers is, I must think, an instance of absolute error; it has no finer quality of its own, and the reminiscence of Holbein is not fortunate. "The Refectory" makes large amends: he has never done more perfect work than this. The cadence of colours is just and noble; witness the red-leaved book open in one monk's hand on the white cloth, the clear green jug on the table, the dim green bronze of the pitcher on the floor; beside it a splendid cat, its fur beautiful with warm black bars on an exquisite ground of dull grey, its expectant eye and mouth lifted without further or superfluous motion. The figures are noble by mere force of truth; there is nothing of vulgar ugliness or theatrical holiness. As good but not so great as the celebrated "Ex-voto" of a past year, this picture is wholly worthy of a name already famous.

The large work of Baron Leys stands out amid the overflow all round it of bad and feeble attempts or pretences at work in all the strength of its great quality of robust invention. It has the interest of excellent narrative; in every face there is a story. A great picture is

something other than this; but this also is a great thing done. It is a chapter of history written in colours; a study which may remind us of Meinhold's great romances, though the author of "Sidonia the Sorceress" may stand higher as a writer than Leys as a painter. All the realistic detail is here, but not the vital bloom and breath of action which Meinhold had to give. Rigour of judicial accuracy might refuse to this work the praise of a noble picture; for to that the final imprint and seal of beauty is requisite; and this beauty, if a man's hand be but there to bestow it, may be wrought out of homely or heavenly faces, out of rare things or common, out of Titian's women or Rembrandt's. It is not the lack of prettiness which lowers the level of a picture. Here for imagination we have but intellect, for charm of form we have but force of thought. Too much also is matter of mere memory; thus the clerk writing is but a bastard brother of Holbein's Erasmus. Form and colour are vigorous, if hard also and heavy; and when all is said it must in the end be still accepted as a work of high and rare power after its own kind, and that no common kind, nor unworthy of studious admiration and grave thanksgiving.

I have compared Albert Moore to Théophile Gautier; I am tempted to compare Mr. Leslie to Hégésippe Moreau. The low melodious notes of his painting have the soft reserve of tone and still sweetness of touch which belong to the idyllic poet of the Voulzie. Sometimes he almost attains the gentle grace of the other's best verse—though I hardly remember a picture of his as exquisite for music and meaning as the "Étrennes à la Fermière." His work of this year has much of tender beauty, especi-

ally the picture called "Home News;" his portraits have always a pleasant and genuine quality of their own; and in the picture called "The Empty Sleeve," though trenching somewhat nearly on the obvious and facile ground of family feeling and domestic exhibition, there is enough of truth and grace visible to keep it up on the proper level of art.

The "Evening Hymn" of Mr. Mason is in my mind the finest I have seen of his works, admirable beyond all where all are admirable. A row of girls, broken in rank here and there, stand and sing on a rough green rise of broken ground; behind them is a wild spare copse, beyond it a sunset of steady and sombre fire stains red with its sunken rays the long low space of sky; above this broad band of heavy colour the light is fitful and pale. The raised faces and opening mouths of the singers are as graceful as those carved by Della Robbia or Donatello in their choral groups; nothing visible of gape or strain, yet the action of song is made sensible. Their fine features are not over fine; they have all an air of the fields and the common country, which is confirmed in the figures, cast in a somewhat ruder mould, of the two young peasants who stand listening. One girl stands off a little from the rest, conning the text with eyes set fast upon her open book; the rest sing freely at large; the middle group of three girls is most noble and exquisite. Rich at once, and grave in the colour, stately and sweet in the composition, this picture is a model of happy and majestic temperance.

Mr. Walker's picture of "Vagrants" has more of actual beauty than his "Bathers" of last year; more of brilliant

skill and swift sharp talent it can hardly have. The low marsh with its cold lights of grey glittering waters here and there; the stunted brushwood, the late and pale sky; the figures gathering about the kindling fire, sad and wild and worn and untameable; the one stately shape of a girl standing erect, her passionate beautiful face seen across the smoke of the scant fuel; all these are wrought with such appearance of ease and security and speed of touch, that the whole seems almost a feat of mere skill rather than a grave sample of work; but in effect it is no such slight thing.

In Mr. Armstrong's "Daffodils" there is a still sobriety of beauty, a quiet justice and a fine gravity of manner, far unlike the flash and flare of obtrusive cleverness which vexes us so often in English work of this kind. The sombre sweetness of a coming twilight is poured upon hill and field; only the yellow flowers wreathed about the child's hat or held by the boy kneeling on the stile relieve the tender tone of sunless daylight with soft and tempered colour. The action of the figures has all the grace of simple truth and childlike nature.

"The Exiled Jacobite" of Mr. Lidderdale is full of the noble sadness of the subject, excellent also as a genuine picture, a work of composed harmony. The noble worn face of the old man, stamped with the sacred seal of patience and pain, looks seaward over the discoloured stonework of the low wall, beyond the dull grey roofs of a low-lying town that slope to the foreign shore. His eyes are not upon the dusky down sweeping up behind, the rough quaint houses and deep hollow, veiled all and blue with the misty late air; they are set, sad and strong,

upon things they shall never see indeed again. From the whole figure the spirit of the old song speaks:

> "Now all is done that man can do,
> And all is done in vain."

The pathos of the picture is masculine and plain as truth; the painter might have written under it the simple first words of the same most noble song:

> "It was a' for our rightful king."

Mr. Poynter's picture of "The Catapult" has an admirable energy of thought and handiwork; the force and weight of faculty shown in it would be worthy remark if the result were less excellent. Excellent of its kind it is, but not delightful; surprise and esteem it provokes, but not the glad gratitude with which we should welcome all great work. The labouring figures and the monstrous engine are worthy of wonder and praise; but there is a want on the whole of beauty, a want in detail of interest. The painter's "Israel in Egypt" had more of both qualities, though there is this year a visible growth of power; it left upon our eyes a keen impression of gorgeous light and cruelty and splendour and suffering; it had more room for the rival effects at once of fine art and of casual sentiment.

The two pictures of Mr. Hughes show all his inevitable grace and tender way of work; they are full of gentle colour and soft significance. The smaller is to me the sweeter sample; but both are noticeable for their clear soft purity and bright delicacy of thought and touch. In the larger picture the bird singing on the sill, delicious as it would be anywhere, has here a double charm.

There is a genuine force and a quaint beauty in Mr. Houghton's picture—portrait it can hardly be called —of a gentleman in his laboratory. His other picture, of a boy lifting up a younger child to smell a rose on the tree, while a kitten bounds at his feet, is admirable for its plain direct grace of manner.

The head of a priest by Mr. Burgess has a clear air of truth and strength ; its Spanish manner recalls the style of Phillip, whom the painter, it seems, has sought to emulate. Among the few portraits worth a look or a word, is that of Mrs. Birket Foster by Mr. Orchardson ; though the showy simplicity be something of a knack, and the painting of woodwork and drapery rather a trick of trade acquired than a test of accomplished power, the work is so well done and the action so plain and good as to bear and to reward a second look.

The show of this year is noticeably barren in landscape. Nothing is here of Inchbold, nothing of Anthony. The time which can bring forth but two such men should have also brought forth men capable to judge them and to enjoy. Even here however the field is not all sterile : there are two studies of sea by Mr. H. Moore, worthy to redeem the whole waste of a year. One of these shows an ebbing tide before the squall comes up ; the soft low tumult of washing waves, not yet beaten into storm and foam, but weltering and whitening under cloud and wind, will soon gather power and passion ; as yet there is some broken and pallid sunlight flung over it by faint flashes, which serve but to show the deepening trouble and quickening turmoil of reluctant waters. The shifting and subtle colours of the surging sea and grey blowing sky

are beautiful and true. The study of storm subsiding as the waves beat up inshore, though vigorous and faithful, is in parts somewhat heavy; but the jostling breakers muster and fight and fall with all the grace and force of nature.

In these stray notes I had meant to set down nothing in dispraise of this picture or that, but merely to say of such as I found good the best I had to say; passing by of necessity many well worthy of praise or blame, and many more not wholly worthy of either. Of these indeed the main part of an exhibition must usually be made up; of mediocrities and ingenuities which art must on the whole ignore and put aside without rebuke, though they may not call aloud for fire to consume them. But a word may here be said of M. Édouard Frère; a name that carries weight with it. He has been likened to Wordsworth; it must be a Wordsworth shorn of his beams. In the large field of the poet there are barren and weedy places enough; he may at times, with relaxed hand and bedimmed eye, drop from the hills to the quagmires, and croak there to children, instead of singing to men; but the qualities which at such times a great poet may have in common with a small painter are not the qualities which make him great. When we find in M. Frère the majesty and music of thought, the stately strength and high-toned harmonies, the deep sure touch and keen-edged pathos of the poet, then only we may grant the kinship. To the rags and tatters, the stubble and sweepings of Wordsworth, he meantime is more than welcome. What is there in this year's picture well conceived, well composed, well painted? what of effect, of

harmony, of variety in these crude monotonous figures? A great artist in verse or in colour may assuredly make some great thing out of the commonest unwashed group of dull faces; but the workman must first be great; and this workman, without force of hand or delicacy, without depth or grace of painting, would pass off on us, in lieu of these, such mere trickeries of coarse and easy sentiment as are fit only to "milk the maudlin eyes" of M. Prudhomme and his wife. Turn from his work to that of M. Legros, and compare the emasculate with the masculine side of French art.

Among the drawings here are two studies by Mr. Sandys, both worthy of the high place held by the artist. One is a portrait full of force and distinction, drawn as perhaps no other man among us can draw; the other, a woman's face, is one of his most solid and splendid designs; a woman of rich, ripe, angry beauty, she draws one warm long lock of curling hair through her full and moulded lips, biting it with bared bright teeth, which add something of a tiger's charm to the sleepy and couching passion of her fair face. But of that which is not here I have also something to say. Exclusion and suppression of certain things in the range of art are not really possible to any academy upon earth, be it pictorial or literary. It is natural for academies to try, when any rare or new good thing comes before them in either kind; witness much of academic history in England as in France; but the record of their ill-will has always been the record of their impotence. Mr. Sandys' picture of "Medea" is well enough known by this time, wherever there is any serious knowledge of art, to claim here some

word of comment, not less seasonable than if it were now put forward to grace the great show of the year. Like Coriolanus, the painter might say if he would that it is his to banish the judges, his to reject the "common cry" of academics. For this, beyond all doubt, is as yet his masterpiece. Pale as from poison, with the blood drawn back from her very lips, agonized in face and limbs with the labour and the fierce contention of old love with new, of a daughter's love with a bride's, the fatal figure of Medea pauses a little on the funereal verge of the wood of death, in act to pour a blood-like liquid into the soft opal-coloured hollow of a shell. The future is hard upon her, as a cup of bitter poison set close to her mouth; the furies of Absyrtus, the furies of her children, rise up against her from the unrisen years; her eyes are hungry and helpless, full of a fierce and raging sorrow. Hard by her, henbane and aconite and nightshade thrive and grow full of fruit and death; before her fair feet the bright-eyed toads engender after their kind. Upon the golden ground behind is wrought in allegoric decoration the likeness of the ship Argo, with other emblems of the tragic things of her life. The picture is grand alike for wealth of symbol and solemnity of beauty.

The present year has other pictures to be proud of, not submitted to the loose and slippery judgment of an academy. Of one or two such I am here permitted to make mention. The great picture which Mr. Whistler has now in hand is not yet finished enough for any critical detail to be possible; it shows already promise of a more majestic and excellent beauty of form than his earlier studies, and of the old delicacy and melody of

ineffable colour. Of three slighter works lately painted I may set down a few rapid notes; but no task is harder than this of translation from colour into speech, when the speech must be so hoarse and feeble, when the colour is so subtle and sublime. Music or verse might strike some string accordant in sound to such painting, but a mere version such as this is as a psalm of Tate's to a psalm of David's. In all of these the main strings touched are certain varying chords of blue and white, not without interludes of the bright and tender tones of floral purple or red. In two of the studies the keynote is an effect of sea; in one, a sketch for the great picture, the soft brilliant floor-work and wall-work of a garden balcony serve in its stead to set forth the flowers and figures of flowerlike women. In a second, we have again a gathering of women in a balcony; from the unseen flower-land below tall almond-trees shoot up their topmost crowns of tender blossom; beyond and far out to west and south the warm and solemn sea spreads wide and soft without wrinkle of wind. The dim floor-work in front, delicate as a summer cloud in colour, is antiphonal to the wealth of water beyond: and between these the fair clusters of almond-blossom make divine division. Again the symphony or (if you will) the antiphony is sustained by the fervid or the fainter colours of the women's raiment as they lean out one against another, looking far oversea in that quiet depth of pleasure without words when spirit and sense are filled full of beautiful things, till it seems that at a mere breath the charmed vessels of pleasure would break or overflow, the brimming chalices of the senses would spill this wine

of their delight. In the third of these studies the sea is fresher, lightly kindling under a low clear wind ; at the end of a pier a boat is moored, and women in the delicate bright robes of eastern fashion and colour so dear to the painter are about to enter it ; one is already midway the steps of the pier ; she pauses, half unsure of her balance, with an exquisite fluttered grace of action. Her comrades above are also somewhat troubled, their robes lightly blown about by the sea-wind, but not too much for light laughter and a quivering pleasure. Between the dark wet stair-steps and piles of the pier the sweet bright sea shows foamless here and blue. This study has more of the delight of life than the others ; which among three such may be most beautiful I neither care to guess nor can. They all have the immediate beauty, they all give the direct delight of natural things ; they seem to have grown as a flower grows, not in any forcing-house of ingenious and laborious cunning. This indeed is in my eyes a special quality of Mr. Whistler's genius ; a freshness and fullness of the loveliest life of things, with a high clear power upon them which seems to educe a picture as the sun does a blossom or a fruit.

It is well known that the painter of whom I now propose to speak has never suffered exclusion or acceptance at the hand of any academy. To such acceptance or such rejection all other men of any note have been and may be liable. It is not less well known that his work must always hold its place as second in significance and value to no work done by any painter of his time. Among the many great works of Mr. D. G. Rossetti, I know of none greater than his two latest. These are

types of sensual beauty and spiritual, the siren and the sibyl. The one is a woman of the type of Adam's first wife; she is a living Lilith, with ample splendour of redundant hair;

> "She excels
> All women in the magic of her locks;
> And when she winds them round a young man's neck
> She will not ever set him free again."

Clothed in soft white garments, she draws out through a comb the heavy mass of hair like thick spun gold to fullest length; her head leans back half sleepily, superb and satiate with its own beauty; the eyes are languid, without love in them or hate; the sweet luxurious mouth has the patience of pleasure fulfilled and complete, the warm repose of passion sure of its delight. Outside, as seen in the glimmering mirror, there is full summer; the deep and glowing leaves have drunk in the whole strength of the sun. The sleepy splendour of the picture is a fit raiment for the idea incarnate of faultless fleshly beauty and peril of pleasure unavoidable. For this serene and sublime sorceress there is no life but of the body; with spirit (if spirit there be) she can dispense. Were it worth her while for any word to divide those terrible tender lips, she too might say with the hero of the most perfect and exquisite book of modern times—"Mademoiselle de Maupin"—"Je trouve la terre aussi belle que le ciel, et je pense que la correction de la forme est la vertu." Of evil desire or evil impulse she has nothing; and nothing of good. She is indifferent, equable, magnetic; she charms and draws down the souls of men by pure force of absorption, in no wise wilful or malignant;

outside herself she cannot live, she cannot even see: and because of this she attracts and subdues all men at once in body and in spirit. Beyond the mirror she cares not to look, and could not.

> "Ma mia suora Rahel mai non si smaga
> Dal suo miraglio, e siede tutto 'l giorno."

So, rapt in no spiritual contemplation, she will sit to all time, passive and perfect: the outer light of a sweet spring day flooding and filling the massive gold of her hair. By the reflection in a deep mirror of fervent foliage from without, the chief chord of stronger colour is touched in this picture; next in brilliance and force of relief is the heap of curling and tumbling hair on which the sunshine strikes; the face and head of the siren are withdrawn from the full stroke of the light.

The other picture gives the type opposite to this; a head of serene and spiritual beauty, severe and tender, with full and heavy hair falling straight in grave sweet lines, not, like Lilith's, exuberant of curl and coil; with carven column of throat, solid and round and flawless as living ivory; with still and sacred eyes and pure calm lips; an imperial votaress truly, in maiden meditation: yet as true and tangible a woman of mortal mould, as ripe and firm of flesh as her softer and splendid sister. The mystic emblems in the background show her power upon love and death to make them loyal servants to the law of her lofty and solemn spirit. Behind this figure of the ideal and inaccessible beauty, an inlaid wall of alternate alabaster and black marble bears inwrought on its upper part the rival twin emblems of love and

death, over the bare carven skull poppies impend, and roses over the sweet head with bound blind eyes: in her hand is the palm-branch, a sceptre of peace and of power. The cadence of colour is splendid and simple, a double trinity of green and red, the dim red robe, the deep red poppies, the soft red roses; and again the green veil wound about with wild flowers, the green down of poppy-leaves, the sharper green of rose-leaves.

An unfinished picture of Beatrice (the Beata Beatrix of the Vita Nuova), a little before death, is perhaps the noblest of Mr. Rossetti's many studies after Dante. This work is wholly symbolic and ideal; a strange bird flown earthward from heaven brings her in its beak a full-blown poppy, the funereal flower of sleep. Her beautiful head lies back, sad and sweet, with fast-shut eyes in a death-like trance that is not death; over it the shadow of death seems to impend, making sombre the splendour of her ample hair and tender faultless features. Beyond her the city and the bridged river are seen as from far, dim and veiled with misty lights as though already "sitting alone, made as a widow." Love, on one side, comes bearing in his hand a heart in flames, having his eyes bent upon Dante's; on the other side is Dante, looking sadly across the way towards Love. In this picture the light is subdued and soft, touching tenderly from behind the edges of Beatrice's hair and raiment; in the others there is a full fervour of daylight.

The great picture of Venus Verticordia has now been in great measure recast; the head is of a diviner type of beauty; golden butterflies hover about the halo of her hair, alight upon the apple or the arrow in her hands;

her face has the sweet supremacy of a beauty imperial and immortal; her glorious bosom seems to exult and expand as the roses on each side of it. The painting of leaf and fruit and flower in this picture is beyond my praise or any man's; but of one thing I will here take note; the flash of green brilliance from the upper leaves of the trellis against the sombre green of the trees behind.

Another work, as yet incomplete, is a study of La Pia; she is seen looking forth from the ramparts of her lord's castle, over the fatal lands without; her pallid splendid face hangs a little forward, wan and white against the mass of dark deep hair; under her hands is a work of embroidery, hanging still on the frame unfinished; just touched by the weak weary hands, it trails forward across the lap of her pale green raiment, into the foreground of the picture. In her eyes is a strange look of wonder and sorrow and fatigue, without fear and without pain, as though she were even now looking beyond earth into the soft and sad air of purgatory: she presses the deadly marriage-ring into the flesh of her finger, so deep that the soft skin is bloodless and blanched from the intense imprint of it.

Two other studies, as yet only sketched, give promise of no less beauty; the subject of one was long since handled by the artist in a slighter manner. It also is taken from the Vita Nuova; Dante in a dream beholding Beatrice dead, tended by handmaidens, and Love, with bow and dart in hand, in act to kiss her beautiful dead mouth. The other is a design of Perseus showing to Andromeda the severed head of Medusa, reflected in water; an old and well-worn subject, but renewed

and reinformed with life by the vital genius of the artist. In the Pompeian picture we see the lovers at halt beside a stream, on their homeward way; here we see them in their house, bending over the central cistern or impluvium of the main court. The design is wonderful for grace and force; the picture will assuredly be one of the painter's greatest.

Wide and far apart as lie their provinces of work, their tones of thought and emotion, the two illustrious artists of whom I have just said a short and inadequate word have in common one supreme quality of spirit and of work, coloured and moulded in each by his individual and inborn force of nature; the love of beauty for the very beauty's sake, the faith and trust in it as in a god indeed. This gift of love and faith, now rare enough, has been and should be ever the common apanage of artists. *Rien n'est vrai que le beau;* this should be the beginning and the ending of their belief, held in no small or narrow sense, but in the largest and most liberal scope of meaning. Beauty may be strange, quaint, terrible, may play with pain as with pleasure, handle a horror till she leave it a delight; she forsakes not such among her servants as Webster or as Goya. No good art is unbeautiful; but much able and effective work may be, and is. Mere skill, mere thought and trouble, mere feeling or mere dexterity, will never on earth make a man painter or poet or artist in any kind. Hundreds of English pictures just now have but these to boast of; and with these even studious and able men are often now content; forgetful that art is no more a matter of mere brain-work than of mere handicraft. The worship of beauty, though

beauty be itself transformed and incarnate in shapes diverse without end, must be simple and absolute; hence only must the believer expect profit or reward. Over every building made sacred to art of any sort, upon the hearts of all who strive after it to serve it, there should be written these words of the greatest master now living among us:—

"La beauté est parfaite,
La beauté peut toute chose,
La beauté est la seule chose au monde qui n'existe pas à demi."

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